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Abstract

This thesis is about art exhibition design undertaken under the particular conditions of presenting conceptual artworks in historic preserved buildings. When undertaking such a project, there are many key considerations including unique special characteristics of the building, the conceptual idea of the artwork, preservation regulation, circulation requirements and the installation itself.

Jae Eun Choi is a Korean conceptual artist who held an exhibition in the National Gallery in Prague, Czech Republic which was built as the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia. The exhibition was called 'The House that Continuously Circulates' and brought together a variety of photography, film, sound and object installation. I was involved in the project as a spatial designer to realise the conceptual artwork within the exhibition venue. The exhibition space in the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia is very historic and highly preserved by the National Gallery. To create an exhibition there required understanding of space and technical knowledge of installation.

Every exhibition has its own context of both exhibits and venue. They must be distinguished first. They are not always the same but have relationships with both their theoretical and historical background. Art has its creator, the concept, and a social and cultural context of the time. The venue has the location, history and a cultural role of the space and the building, as well as the current conditions as an exhibition space. Understanding the context of both the art objects and the venue are the main components of the exhibition and provide clear requirements and necessities of the exhibition design. To understand this relationship, the context of the project in Prague is compared to various historical and notable references of art, architecture and exhibition design.

Through the experience of designing an art exhibition in a historic building, it became apparent that I dealt with the design of the space through particular ways of thinking; how can this space obtain unique conditions that are only happening in that place at that time, and how can the artworks and architecture merge without harming each other. Through this process, I developed a concept for designing such space, which I refer to as 'presence and coexistence'. In order to achieve this, a certain starting point is required; what is the meaning of the artworks and therefore the premise of the design, and what must be understood to exhibit in the specific context of conceptual art in a historic building. Even with this knowledge, to create space with presence and coexistence, a methodology is recommended. The methodology I have developed includes three key design considerations; the environment, the scale and the points of contact. The environment is about seeing conditional elements together. The scale is about considering the actual size of the space and the artwork in relation to each other. The point of contact is about the specific installation details. These are not specific details or tools of design but methods of how to solve particular issues and considerations for spatial design in this context. Having a method for solving such issues and knowing the particular points to look out for contributes towards a strong design concept and the power of the design realisation. The 'House that Continuously Circulates' exhibition in the Convent of St. Agnes ties this context and the method into one theory.

Keywords display, space, art, exhibition, Prague, historic building, contextual, installation, contemporary art, Jae Eun Choi

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Preface

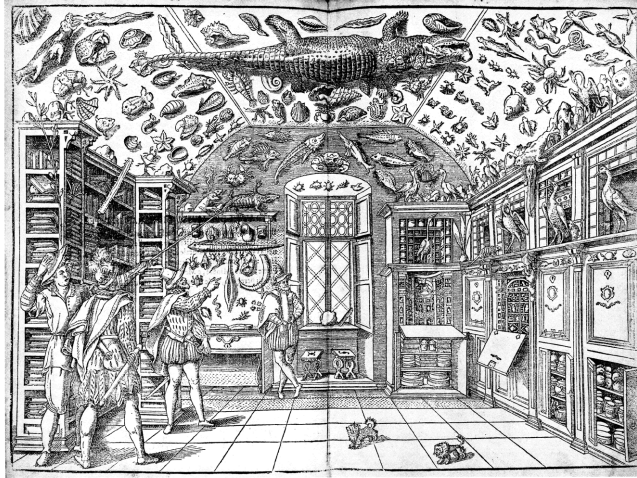


Illustration of Ferrante Imperato's 'cabinet of curiosity' One of the first pictorial representation published in Dell'Historia Naturale (Naples 1599). Source from The Origins of Museums. Impey, O R, and Arthur MacGregor.

Origin of display

During the Renaissance period people had a great interest in the natural world. This led, in the middle of the sixteenth century, to the idea of the 'cabinet of curiosities', also known as 'Kunstkammer' and 'Wunderkammer', which started as encyclopedic collections of rare and valuable objects at the time. Such objects were collected by early naturalists for fundamental research and publications. They gathered rare objects, put them in cabinets and appreciated the objects within their social communities. The range of collections later became wider and included manmade antiquities. Eventually these collections were, after the demise of the 'cabinet of curiosity,' acquired for display in museums. This practice is known as the precursor to the modern museums of Europe and although it seems slightly eccentric, should be taken seriously.

'Against the perspective of some four centuries of museum history, it is understandably easy to view these earliest collections as somewhat quaint. The terminology adopted in their description helps to further this attitude: the 'cabinet of curiosities', the 'closet of rarities' and the 'Wunderkammer' all have an endearingly whimsical ring to them. The collectors' fondness for products of 'singularity, chance and the shuffle of things' provides easy reinforcement for this tendency. As an assessment of the basis on which such collections were assembled and were viewed by contemporary observers, however, it is both inadequate and

misconceived. In reality, those very traits of diversity and miscellaneity which serve in our eyes to impair the serious intent of these collections were essential elements in the programme whose aim was nothing less than universality.¹

Two interesting points are seen through the history of the ‘cabinets of curiosities’; what is collected and how and why these objects are displayed. Firstly, the objects deemed collectable went through change and flux over time. Having started as collections of natural objects like shells from the deep ocean or strange creatures from unknown islands, ancient objects of humankind became the interest of the collectors and therefore valuable. The value of the collections also changed from time to time. What was very rare and valuable one day, after many such objects were found, suddenly lost its uniqueness and therefore value. This sense of value not only depended on rarity but also societal and personal perception of importance, a trait within collections that continues to this day. Oliver Impey and Arthur Macgrego, the authors of ‘The origins of the museums’, mention this point and describe;

‘Perhaps in response to a growing awareness of the value of these exotic exhibits as representatives of the societies which produced them, collectors began to take an interest in formerly unconsidered elements of their own surroundings. ... Equally scholars began to consider their own local natural history in terms other than those of the chase, and to describe and collect items where possible. ... In the case of natural abnormalities, such as stags’ heads with deformed antlers, collectors’ enthusiasm and covetousness knew no bounds.’²

The first purpose of the ‘cabinet of curiosities’ was that of ‘keeping and sorting’ which are fundamental purposes for other public facilities for man and nature, for example libraries, botanical and zoological gardens and research laboratories. However, the diversity of object and personal nature of collections causes the accuracy of the initial keeping and sorting function of the cabinets to be questioned. Instability of the classification of these objects was common, as stated by Oliver Impey and Arthur Macgrego;

‘...no reliance can be placed on contemporary terminology, as this, as much as the contents of the cabinets themselves was affected by matters of geography, chronology, social standing and personality.’³

In addition to keeping and sorting, the second key function of the ‘cabinet of curiosities’ as the origin to museums, is for ‘seeing and showing’. Supplementing the functional aspects of keeping and sorting, seeing and showing was vital for the cabinets’ collections. How to show what is collected by the collector is important because the collection has personality in addition to encyclopedic arrangement.

In the modern era, the ‘cabinets of curiosities’ differentiated into many types of museums such as history, science, and art museums. The characteristic aspect of the ‘cabinets of curiosity’ was inherited by the museums, transferring this originally personal practice into a more professional setting. The value of humankind has been selected and shown in such museums. This translation from private to public, personal to professional, was extremely important to furthering the scientific and historical understanding of such objects and their origins. However, displaying collections in the museum context is highly important and valuable beyond simply keeping and sorting.

- 1 Impey O R, and Arthur MacGregor, *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Europe*, Oxford [Oxfordshire: Clarendon Press, 1985, p 1.
- 2 Impey O R, and Arthur MacGregor, *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Europe*, Oxford [Oxfordshire: Clarendon Press, 1985, p 2.
- 3 Impey O R, and Arthur MacGregor, *The Origins of Museums: The Cabinet of Curiosities in Sixteenth and Seventeenth-Century Europe*, Oxford [Oxfordshire: Clarendon Press, 1985, p 3.

Left: Art gallery space after Alexander-Dorner's reorganisation of the Hanover Landesmuseum, ca. late 1920s.

Right: Before Dorner's reorganisation of Landesmuseum ca. early 1920s.



Modern display in art galleries

Once the museum was created as a scientific and historic institution, increasing interest can be seen in the display of the collections themselves. It is this display that makes the collections accessible to the amateur, enabling museums and art galleries to become places of interest for the general public. Over the centuries proceeding the advent of the 'cabinets of curiosities', museum and gallery display changed dramatically. This change moved slowly at first, with salon style display predominant, until a significant shift started in the early twentieth century.

A good example of the key change to modern art display is the Landesmuseum in Hanover in the 1920s. Alexander Dorner became a director of the museum in 1925 and made remarkable change to the display of art in the museum. Before he became director, the art exhibition spaces were traditional salon style. Many paintings were hung on the walls and arranged symmetrically. In some of the rooms, as typical salon styles are, the entire surface of the walls was filled by the paintings and their frames. Mary Anne Staniszewski, the author of the book 'The Power of Display' described that; 'In symmetrical installations, works of art are treated as harmonious room decor.'¹ Counter to this, while Alexander Dorner was director of the museum between 1925 and 1937, he developed a method of displaying art dramatically. He introduced modernistic methods and redesigned the gallery rooms according to his new idea of how the display of art should be achieved. Glenn D. Lowry stated Dorner's display principle in the Encyclopedia Britannica;

'Dorner saw the museum not simply as an instrument of the Enlightenment that was designed to order and classify works of art of the past but as an "educational facility whose purpose is first to develop

a taste for the subject—and secondly, and more importantly, to illustrate the developments of the human spirit in its most independent and liveliest object—in art.” It was this idea of the museum as an educational institution and a place for the discovery and interpretation of the work of contemporary artists²

This type of significant change in space characterised the era. The space of the art gallery became seen dramatically differently. The changes Dörner created for the art gallery were not only changes of the space for art but also changes of relationship between the art and the space. These changes happened during the Modernism period in art. In the era of Modernism, the focus towards space was significant. This shift in direction determined that display became the key to deal with the relationship between art and space.

This question of space is accompanied by a question of place. Just like in a play, where the theatre provides the setup for the happenings on stage. Therefore, we are not able to talk about the space without defining where the space is. Moreover, we are not able to create design or art without a concept of time. Any kind of creation has an aspect of ‘then’ or ‘at the time.’ In this inevitable setup, the eternal question for people who create art and exhibition space is how to translate these conditions into spatial design.

1 Staniszewski Mary A, *The Power of Display: A History of Exhibition Installations at the Museum of Modern Art*, W Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1998. pp 16-17.

2 "museum of modern art", Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2015. Web. 24 Mar. 2015
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1762765/museum-of-modern-art>>.



Introduction

This thesis is about art exhibition design undertaken under the particular conditions of presenting conceptual artworks in historic preserved buildings. When undertaking such a project, there are many key considerations including unique special characteristics of the building, the conceptual idea of the artwork, preservation regulation, circulation requirements and the installation itself.

Jae Eun Choi is a Korean conceptual artist who held an exhibition in the National Gallery in Prague, Czech Republic, which was built as the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia. The exhibition was called ‘The House that Continuously Circulates’ and brought together a variety of photography, film, sound and object installation. I was involved in the project as a spatial designer to realise the conceptual artwork within the exhibition venue. One of the main reasons why Choi asked me to support her and her studio team for the project was because of the spatial uniqueness of the building. The exhibition space in the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia is very historic and highly preserved by the National Gallery. To create an exhibition there required understanding of space and technical knowledge of installation. There are no such difficulties to deal with within a gallery space made by

white walls. However, a space like the Convent of St. Agnes is not the same as a 'white cube' style gallery which offers nothing to the art concept. Historic buildings with unique character can work to enhance the artwork presented within them, adding dignity, atmosphere and meaning. Choi wanted to ensure that her conceptual idea and artworks were perfectly integrated into the setting of the convent. I therefore worked on the development of the project through both the preparation and installation periods.

Each exhibition has its own context of both exhibits and venue. They must be distinguished first. They are not always the same but have relationships with both their theoretical and historical background. Art has its creator, the concept, and a social and cultural context of the time. The venue has location, history and a cultural role of the space and the building, as well as the current conditions as an exhibition space. One of the essential concerns is how the venue is set; is it an art gallery space? Is it for contemporary or classical art? These questions become critical when the art exhibition is designed. Understanding the context of both the art objects and the venue are the main components of the exhibition and provide clear requirements and necessities of the exhibition design.

The focus of this thesis is an explanation of the project of the art exhibition 'The House that Continuously Circulates,' through its development process, a discussion of the spatial and installation design outputs and the formulation of a design theory based on this experience. In order to cover these key areas, the historical context of exhibition display must be considered, including where to display, what to display and how such display is achieved.

Through the experience of designing an art exhibition in a historic building, it became apparent that I dealt with the design of the space through particular ways of thinking. These are not specific details or tools of design but methods of how to solve particular issues and considerations for spatial design in this context. Having a method for solving such issues and knowing the particular points to look out for contributes towards a strong design concept and the power of the design realisation. The 'House that Continuously Circulates' exhibition in the Convent of St. Agnes ties the context and the method into one theory. These methodological solutions as meta design language require clear contextual foundations for use in similar projects.

Context



Left: Picture Gallery of Cornelis van der Geest (1628; Rubenshuis, Antwerp)
source from Wikipedia

Right: Exhibition Gallery at the Louvre, Samuel F.B. Morse (1831–33)
source from Wikipedia

Where to display

White cube / alternative space

The two images above are paintings of art galleries in the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. In these examples, the art gallery spaces are fully crowded with paintings and sculptures. Through these depictions, we are able to see the intention of art display in the gallery setting during this era. However, this cluttered version of curation has since been considered sub-optimal for the display of art. Brian O'Doherty took this opinion, describing the perceived ideal gallery space for arts;

‘The ideal gallery subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is “art.” The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself. This gives the space a presence possessed by other spaces where conventions are preserved through the repetition of a closed system of values. Some of the sanctity of the church, the formality of the courtroom, the mystique of the experimental laboratory joins with chic design to produce a unique chamber of aesthetics. So powerful are the perceptual fields of force within this chamber that, once outside it, art can lapse into secular status.’¹

This attitude towards the ideal display of art has made the actual space of the gallery white, clean and clinical in the late modernist era. The gallery space is always defined by this relationship with the art. Over time, the changes of the art gallery space accompany changes of art which is presented in the space. The wall was the first victim of the influence of art. Originally the walls of a gallery were simply a place to hang paintings, pictures and objects. However, after the beginning of the twentieth century

contemporary art began, and with it the frames of paintings disappeared. Walls became seen as an extension of the artwork itself. By degrees, they started being used to complement the art. Additionally, the influence of contemporary art and its commerciality was not small. Contemporary art induces communication with the outside of artworks. However, creating commerciality of art generalises the art gallery space as unexceptional, and therefore possible anywhere in the world.

It did not take too long for contemporary art to influence both the floor and ceiling as well. By the middle of the twentieth century the 'white cube' became the standard for art gallery spaces. What is perceived as the ideal art gallery space is therefore created by the era. In the modern period, the 'white cube' has been the standard for how art should be presented in the art gallery.

In his book 'Inside the White Cube' published in 1976, Brian O'Doherty stated and questioned the flow of the history of the art gallery space between the 1920s and '70s;

'From the '20s to the '70s, the gallery has a history as distinct as that of the art shown in it. ... The white cube became art-in-potency, its enclosed space an alchemical medium. Art became what was deposited therein, removed and regularly replaced. Is that empty gallery, now full of that elastic space we can identify with mind, modernism's greatest invention?'²

The advent of 'alternative-space'

In parallel with the development of art in the twentieth century, the art world was also seeking new ways of accommodating art. Through these developments, it has been increasingly understood that the relationship between the object and the place is not detachable.

The movement of seeking a new place for art started in the late 1960s by artists who were questioning the museum's authority as an institution.³ 'Alternative space' as an alternative to the traditional commercial venues for arts, was established in New York in the early '70s; for example, 112 Greene

Street; The Institute for Art and Urban Resources in 1972; the Clocktower and Artists Space in 1973; and P.S.1 in 1976. During this period, ‘alternative space’ became a popular venue choice for art galleries and artists alike, with the variety in venue increasing dramatically. Detailing the changes to the required qualities of art gallery spaces, Julie H. Reiss surmised;

‘The past four decades have witnessed a surge of interest from both artists and critics alike in the effect of exhibition context on a work of art. The notion of a “neutral” exhibition space has gradually been eroded. The history of exhibition locale is inextricably intertwined with the history of installation art on several levels. Physical properties of the spaces—the raw, unfinished “alternative” space, or a pristine white gallery—are enormously important in installations where the space becomes integrated into the work.’⁴

In her book, Reiss mentions a quote by Alanna Heiss, who is the founder of P.S.1 in New York. When Heiss had the exhibition called ‘Rooms (P.S.1)’ in 1976, she stated in the catalogue;

‘Rooms (P.S.1) represents an attempt to deal with a problem. Most museums and galleries are designed to show masterpieces; objects made and planned elsewhere for exhibition in relatively neutral spaces. But many artists today do not make self-contained masterpieces; do not want to and do not try to. Nor, are they for the most part interested in neutral spaces. Rather, their work includes the space it’s in; embraces it, uses it. Viewing space becomes not frame but material. And that makes it hard to exhibit. ... Art changes. The ways of exhibiting must change too.’⁵

The concept of ‘alternative space’ brought about various ideas and plenty of locational opportunities for art to present itself. ‘Site-specific art,’ ‘environmental art’ and ‘land art’ are all developments within this concept. This diversity of art development can be said to be the fruits of the search for the place of artworks. Furthermore, the ‘alternative space’ became

increasingly common in the 1990s, as stated by Julie H. Reiss;

‘For many reasons, exhibiting Installation art became commonplace for major art installations by the beginning of the 1990s. The hurdles that initially made Installation art too difficult to assimilate were gradually overcome, in part because museum practice had changed somewhat, and in part because Installation art changed.’⁶

The value of the ‘alternative space’ is the presence of the site. The ‘alternative space’ art exhibition site is hardly exchangeable with any other site in the world. That is the quality of the venue but at the same time a difficulty for commercial art which must be presented anywhere as required. Comparing the two different types of art gallery spaces, ‘white cube’ and ‘alternative space,’ one distinctive characteristic difference appears. That is the contrast of ‘universality’ and ‘individuality’. The ‘white cube’ was created to accommodate contemporary artworks which have variety of artistic appearance. In the art commercialisation process, this was the purest answer to art. On the other hand, ‘alternative space’ was originally found through an attitude of protest and later established for enhancing the uniqueness of artwork.

It should be noted that the existence of buildings of a particular type depends on when and where they were built. Architecture unifies the necessities of the society at the time. However, many buildings outlive their original function, becoming unfit objects to the social conditions of the time. Consequently, many fall into disrepair and are demolished, some are converted to other types of buildings, and some are kept as history. In many countries, unique historical buildings are protected for their importance to society and our understanding of the past. It is therefore imperative to find a use for them that does not adversely affect their preservation but enables them to have a place in modern society. Using this type of building as an art gallery is one of the suitable solutions.

For use as a gallery, historic buildings are an example of one type of ‘alternative space.’ When the building is used for an art exhibition, it can be addressed as a unique type of space. As a characteristic spatial quality of

a historic building, the gap between the functional and social intention of the building when it was built and those now that it is used as an art gallery is extremely important. This can manifest itself through visual scars which have been made by time and historic events that occurred to the building since it was built. They give the building uniqueness. It is the only one in the world.

There are many references of historic buildings which have been turned into public art museums or private art galleries. The advantage of using the historic building as an art exhibition space is that the spatial strength of the building and the 'idea' of the art can enhance the atmosphere of the exhibition. The specific disadvantage is the various difficulties of installation, created by the untouchable architectural elements. Often the building is preserved and therefore it is prohibited to damage the present conditions. For example, no holes to hang are allowed to be created. Nevertheless the potential of the historic building as the 'alternative space' is extremely valuable. Using a historic building for a gallery space offers, therefore, a great opportunity of an artist as well as a great challenge for a spatial designer.

1 O'Doherty Brian, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Santa Monica: Lapis Press, 1986, p 14.

2 O'Doherty Brian, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Santa Monica: Lapis Press, 1986, p 87.

3 Reiss Julie H, *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999, p 70.

4 Reiss Julie H, *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999, xix.

5 Reiss Julie H, *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999, p 126.

6 Reiss Julie H, *From Margin to Center: The Spaces of Installation Art*, Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1999, p 136.

The original Fountain by Marcel Duchamp photographed by Alfred Stieglitz after the 1917 Society of Independent Artists exhibit.
Source from Wikipedia



What to display

Conceptual Art

Marcel Duchamp made a remarkable art piece called the 'fountain' in 1917. This is known as the first expression of conceptual art. Since then, conceptual art as a field of art has been created and developed widely throughout the world. However, the definition was not clearly formulated until the 1960s. Sol LeWitt is known as the first person who specified what conceptual art is;

'In conceptual art the idea or concept is the most important aspect of the work. When an artist uses a conceptual form of art, it means that all of the planning and decisions are made beforehand and the execution is a perfunctory affair. The idea becomes a machine that makes the art.'¹

By this definition of conceptual art, the concept and the idea are the most important elements of the artwork and the actual figure or form is not the priority. The figure of the artwork is the medium to transmit the art concept to the spectators. Throughout the history of conceptual art, there is much variety of medium such as language, events and performances, sound and video installations and even the natural environment. They have not been used as tools for classical art but have found their place in conceptual art.

One of the difficulties of exhibiting conceptual art is displaying intangible objects in the real world. Therefore, the emphasis of display is put on the senses of spectators and their understanding. From that point of view, the display of conceptual art should not solely concern itself with the display of objects. It should display the concept and the intention which the conceptual art has through the five human senses. Therefore, it is vital for conceptual art exhibition design that the concept of the art is transferred through the display.

Space and conceptual art

‘The problem of ‘human’ space has been studied by psychologists for about a hundred years. Taking up the question of man’s experience of his environment, it has been proved that space perception is a complex process, where many variables are involved. We do not simply perceive a world which is common to all of us, as naive realists maintain, but different worlds which are a product of our motivations and past experiences.’²

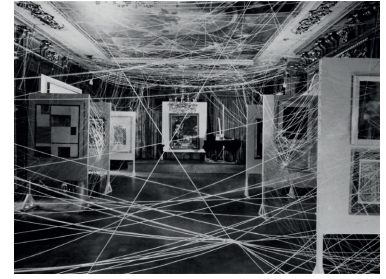
Norberg-Schulz described architectural space, in his book ‘Existence, Space & Architecture,’ with space being one of the most difficult concepts to distinguish. This has led to many philosophical studies about ‘space’ throughout history. It is not my intention to spend time explaining what ‘space’ is, although the concept of ‘space’ is used often in this thesis. When using the word ‘space’ I am referring to human sensory perception.

The space where art is displayed is also a tool for conceptual art to interact with spectators. The conceptual artists are often not only letting art objects exist in the art gallery but also involving the space into the concept of the art. This method is not only used in conceptual art, but it is a prominent characteristic in conceptual artworks. As the remarkable references, two renowned artworks by Marcel Duchamp use the space of the art gallery. They are ‘1,200 Bags of Coal’ shown in the International Exhibition of Surrealism at the Galerie Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1938 and ‘Mile of String’ exhibited at the ‘First papers of Surrealism’ exhibition in New York in 1942. In the former artwork, Duchamp turned over the spatial elements of the gallery which are the ceiling and the floor by hanging 1,200 bags from the ceiling and placing a stove with a light bulb inside on the floor. Brian O’Doherty described both the effect of the art and the influence of Marcel Duchamp’s artwork on the space of art gallery;

‘...Duchamp turned the exhibition topsy-turvy and ‘stood you on your head’. The ceiling is the floor, the floor — a makeshift brazier made from an old barrel, from the looks of it — became a

Left: Marcel Duchamp
Twelve Hundred Coal Bags Suspended
from the Ceiling over a Stove 1938
Installation view of Exposition internationale du surréalisme, Galerie Beaux-Arts, Paris, 1938

Right: Marcel Duchamp "Mile of string"
Installation view of the First Papers of Surrealism exhibition, New York, 1942.
Photographed by John Schiff



chandelier. ... This invention is the first time an artist subsumed an entire gallery in a single gesture - and managed to do so while it was full of other art. (He did this by traversing the space floor to ceiling. ...) ... By exposing the effect of context on art, of the container on the contained, Duchamp recognized an area of art that hadn't yet been invented. ... From this moment on, there is a seepage of energy from art to its surroundings. With time the ratio between the literalization of art and mythification of the gallery inversely increases.³

In 'Mile of String,' Duchamp highlights the space of the art gallery and shifts the focus of the spectators from art on the walls to the space made by the string crisscrossing at will in the room. Brian O'Doherty clearly valued Duchamp's artwork seeing him as setting new boundaries for art concepts;

'The string, by keeping the spectator from the art, became the one thing he/she remembered. Instead of being an intervention, something between the spectator and the art, it gradually became new art of some kind. ... The string literalized the space many of the pictures in the exhibition illustrated. This actualization of a pictorial convention may be an (unconscious?) precedent for the will to actualize of the late sixties and seventies. To paint something is to recess it in illusion, and dissolving the frame transferred that function to gallery space.'⁴

These are two of the most striking references of conceptual art in its infancy. In Duchamp's artwork, there is a strong relationship between the conceptual art and the space which exists around it. Equally, there are many other references which use the space as a medium of the art concept. In

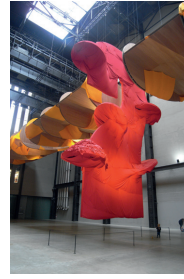
such cases, the conceptual art cannot be explained without the understanding of the space and its relationship to the art. Therefore, it is fundamental to design the art object together with deep consideration for the space it will be displayed in. When designing the exhibition for conceptual art, it is therefore primary to question; what the art intends to express, what is the medium, how the art effects the actual space of the exhibition, and what is the best way of creating the art as a whole.

- 1 Sol LeWitt, *Paragraphs on Conceptual Art*, Artforum, June 1967.
- 2 Norberg-Schulz Christian, *Existence, Space & Architecture*, New York: Praeger, 1971. p 10.
- 3 O'Doherty Brian, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Santa Monica: Lapis Press, 1986. p 69.
- 4 O'Doherty Brian, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, Santa Monica: Lapis Press, 1986. p 73.

Left: Tate Modern London view from the entrance, 2013

Middle: Turbin Hall exhibition space, 2015

Right: Art gallery space in Tate Modern, 2015



Reference art galleries

As stated above, the two elements of art and venue have specific characteristics. Each of them have their own backgrounds of history and culture and within the gallery context they are strongly interlinked and even interfere with each other. By analysing reference projects, it is possible to visualise the theoretical position of the art exhibition project undertaken at the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia. Two relevant reference galleries are the Tate Modern in London, UK and The Bunker in Berlin, Germany. Both of these are now run as modern or contemporary art galleries and were built for very different purposes at the time. Both have unique spatial characters and interesting development histories which influence the adaptation of the buildings into art venues.

To optimise the understanding of these references, they are described through three keys areas; the building conditions, typical art display within them and their installation treatment. By comparing these references and the project at the Convent of St. Agnes, both commonality and differences can be seen.

The Tate Modern

The Tate Modern in London is an example of converting a historical building into an art museum. The building was a power station, built in two stages between 1947 and 1963 and closed in 1981. In 2000, the building reopened as a modern art gallery.

The Tate Modern has two different types of gallery spaces; typical art gallery rooms and the Turbine Hall. The typical gallery spaces are arranged on three floors in the north part of the building. The Turbine Hall is a large and unique gallery space to the south. The space spans five stories of the

building and the entire length, making it 35 meters high and 152 meters long. This space is used as a temporary art gallery for single commissions.

Every year between 2000 and 2012 the famous temporary art exhibition series called 'The Unilever Series' was held, for which an artist commissioned by the museum created large contemporary art in the Turbine Hall; for example Anish Kapoor created a huge art object which filled the Turbine Hall's space in 2002, Rachel Whiteread placed a large number of white cubes that changed the spatial atmosphere in the hall in 2005 and Doris Salcedo made a long continuous crack in the concrete floor in 2007. These artworks were all unique and outstanding. To accommodate these artworks in the space, only the floor and the ceiling were able to be used for the art installation. The installation scheme had to be appropriately planned for the specific space. This uniqueness of the space limits the display flexibility, however the spatial characteristic also enhances the coherence of art and architecture.

This is an example of converting the function completely from a power station to a museum. It keeps the shell of the architectural appearance how it used to be, but does not preserve the originality of the function. It is intentionally converted to the museum to accommodate the flexibility of art installation. Roughly speaking, only the Turbine Hall is treated as an 'alternative space,' and other rooms are relatively flexible 'white cube' spaces which enable universality for art display.

The Sammlung Boros

As a contemporary art gallery for private collections, The Bunker in Mitte, Berlin, is a remarkable example. The building was built as a bomb shelter in 1943 by the Nazi Party. After the war, the mass of the concrete building was then used as a prison, a refrigerated storage space and then a techno club. In the end, the building was bought by a private art collector and renovated into a contemporary art gallery for their private collection. The renovation was finished in 2007 and the first exhibition opened in 2008. The first exhibition ended after 4 years, with the second exhibition starting in 2012.

Left: Sammlung Boros exterior view, 2015

Right: Sammlung Boros, reception, 2015



The renovation and art installation have been carefully completed to bring both identities together. The building retains the original external appearance and the historic atmosphere in its current condition. Some internal walls and slabs have been demolished to provide a 3-dimensional visual sequence and to accommodate large scale contemporary art objects. However, most of the internal walls are kept as they used to be. Some parts of the walls are covered or painted for installing art objects.

The references above are notable examples of converting iconic twentieth century buildings into art galleries. They now have the function of an art gallery, which is a significant departure from their original purpose. Additionally, there are many examples of art museums or exhibition spaces within historic classical buildings, for example the Palace of Versailles and the Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow. These are both classical monumental buildings which are used as art galleries. The Palace of Versailles is a opulent palace open to the public. Its main function is not to be an art museum but this historic space is utilised for special exhibitions. For example, Jeff Koons in 2008, Takashi Murakami in 2010 and Lee Ufan in 2014. The Gallery of Modern Art in Glasgow was originally built in 1778 as a private dwelling for a hugely wealthy tobacco merchant and after various functions in between, was converted to a public modern art gallery which opened in 1996. The gallery has both permanent collections and temporary exhibitions which are displayed within the main historic exhibition space as well as a number of white cube style rooms.

The principal difference between the art exhibition in the convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia and these references is functional changes and the characteristics of the art contents in these buildings. These first two references, Tate Modern and The Bunker, are mostly capable of dealing with contemporary art pieces which sometimes require highly flexible space.

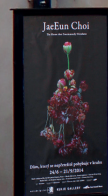
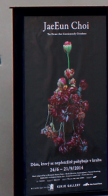
On the other hand, the convent, although the building is now used as the National Gallery for historic objects, is not flexible to accommodate contemporary art. The difference in age and significance between the building and the art that it houses is also important. Within the historical convent setting, contemporary art creates a juxtaposition which both enhances the atmosphere of the exhibition but also has the ability to create an uneasiness or unsettling quality for the spectator.



Left: Ai weiwei, Tree, 2009/10
Right: Thomas Scheibitz, Tinte
und Zucker, 2007

The House that Continuously Circulates

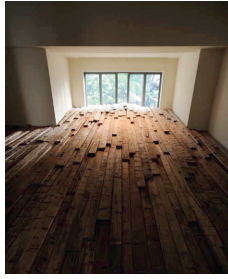
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The House that Continuously Circulates

The exhibition 'The House that Continuously Circulates' is the composition of two key elements; Jae Eun Choi's artworks and the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia. An understanding of these is fundamental from the start. This chapter will focus on three key points to describe the project in detail; spatial characteristics within the building, Choi's artwork and the installation design that brought these two elements together.

Firstly, it is important to deal with the spatial characteristics of each space used to display artwork in the building. Particularly for this type of unique building, the exhibition space must be described in order to understand the installation design. These descriptions give the background to why the exhibition design developed the way it did. The second point is Choi's artwork and its artistic intention. This solo exhibition showed Choi's art pieces. Choi's art concepts must be respected and well-understood to understand the exhibition design. The exhibition has a main theme as well as ideas for each individual item. The third, and most important, point is the specific design themes of the installation design in each space. In between the architecture and art, it is important to describe the main topic of the design, how it was realised in the space, what the challenging points to solve within the theme of design were, and how and why these design decisions were made during the project development. These are the most interesting points for this project because of the combination of conceptual art which requires a gesture in a space and a historic, preserved building which does not allow the artist/designer to undertake much free installation in the building. Mostly, the spectators and art critics comment on and judge art exhibitions without seeing these points because they are not so obvious or visible. However, by showing the spatial design as a particular part of this type of project, the value and meaning of designing between art and architecture can be explained.



Left: Verse-, Installation view at Kukje Gallery, 2012

Right: Jae Eun Choi, FORESTS OF ASOKA, Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, 2010

The artist: Jae Eun Choi

Jae-Eun Choi is a Korean conceptual artist. She moved to Japan in the mid-1970s. Since then, Choi has succeeded within both cultural backgrounds, notably creating the Japanese pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 1995, Real DMZ Project in 2014, and many solo exhibitions in both Korea and Japan through her lifetime. Choi has also participated in international art exhibitions, including; The 3rd Asia Pacific Triennial, Australia in 1999, Prague Triennial, ITCA 2008, National Gallery in Prague, Czech Republic in 2008, and so on.

Choi, as a conceptual artist, has worked on various art installations related with sites and spaces. Typical of Choi's art is to bring out the best qualities of the space of the site. Through her recent artworks, Choi has been interested in the idea of time and space. In her exhibition catalogue "Lucy and her time", Jinsang Yoo, art critic, describes Choi and her artworks;

'Jae Eun Choi's work has consistently dealt with themes of poetic compression, exploring the presence of infinite time and space in pieces ranging from "Lucy and her time", to "Forest of Aśoka", to "-verse". On every continent on earth, the concept of space-time is a key element of metaphysical culture —a base line to establish humanity's coordinates in the universe. Likewise, language and the act of naming is an essential facet to understanding the meaning of existence. These are the foundational themes of Jae Eun Choi's oeuvre.'¹

Choi's sensitivity to time and space enhance the spatial quality of a gallery. Therefore the task to realise the exhibition for her artworks in the gallery space is a great responsibility and requires a high skill in dealing with space.

Choi was commissioned for the art exhibition at the site of the convent by the National Gallery because of the relationship with her previous project. Since 1986 Choi has been working on her own world-wide project 'World Underground Project'. She buried traditional Japanese paper in several locations around the world such as Korea, France, Japan, USA, Kenya, Germany, Italy and the Czech Republic and dug them up many years later to present their change with time. As an extension of the project, Choi was asked to exhibit her artworks as art installation in the National Historical Museum in Prague, Czech Republic. Choi explained her idea and the outline of her 'World Underground Project' in her exhibition catalogue;

'The World Underground Project' was conceived in 1986. It is a project that is still active and ongoing in many different parts of the world. In this project I bury a specially produced paper under the soil and dig it out after a certain period of time has elapsed. The paper I use is produced in Fukui, Imatate in the Northern part of Japan. It is a very dense type of paper made in a traditional way with the bark from three kinds of plants - Ganpi, Kouzo and Asa. The project first began at mount To-am of Gyung Ju in Korea. It then traveled to other parts of Asia, America, Europe and Africa. After I bury the paper it stays under the soil for a very long period of time (from 3 up to 15 years) until it is finally unearthed to encounter the air outside. During the period the paper is interred under the soil, each sheet changes in a distinct and unpredictable way that documents the geological and biological characteristics of that place. When it is exposed to the air, new changes rapidly begin to take place with subtle chemical reactions occurring giving the paper new life. Sometimes the paper absorbs different traits such as the color from the different soils. Some become like fossils, resembling a decomposed and extinguished thing. In this way the paper reflects the condition of unexpectedness and the chaos embodied in everything that is living. This is the world that intrigues me and inspires me to continue the project. Sometimes I let the paper stay buried in the soil indefinitely. I imagine the infinity of life after our death, when

all living things decompose back to soil and new plants grow. World Underground Project is inspired by the fundamental condition that governs our human existence, especially the endless cycle of life and death embodied in the infinite circulation of time”.²

This continuity of the art project was an important characteristic of this art exhibition in Prague. Not only the output of the project but also Choi's deep thoughts needed to be transferred from the 'World Underground Project' to this exhibition. The meaning of time and space consist of the past and the future and internal and external features. Designing this exhibition required understanding of these conceptual aspects.

1 Choi Jae Eun, *Lucy and Her Time*, Kukje Gallery, 2012, pp 10-15.

2 Choi Jae Eun, *Lucy and Her Time*, Kukje Gallery, 2012. p 52.



Project site of the 'World Underground Project, in the courtyard of the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia





Left: Exterior view from courtyard

Right: Exterior view to main part of the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia
Source from Anežský Klášter V Praze

The site: The Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia

Location

The Vltava (Moldau in German), known as the national river of the Czech Republic, comes from the southern part of the Bohemian forest, runs through the city of Prague, and ends up merging with the Elbe in Germany. The old town of Prague as the capital of Bohemia, situated on the southern side of the river. The Convent of St. Agnes was built in the area of old town, where the Vltava forms a curve. Fifteen minutes walk from the main square of the old town the area becomes quiet, as if the area is captured in an enclosed bubble, and reminds me of the castle's garden in the animation film 'Castle in the sky.'¹ This is where the convent is located. A mysterious atmosphere and romantic phenomenon cover the area and it seems that time stopped long ago.

History and the development of the convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia

Once you enter the building of the Convent of St. Agnes and walk through the rooms and spaces, you realise that you are in an unexpected spatial experience which you have not encountered before. Each room is planned symmetrically, with high vaults and Gothic windows creating church-like spaces, whilst rendered walls and old brickwork give the feeling of history. Still, something does not feel the same as a church. Once you know the history of the building and analyse the plans and sections it soon becomes clear why. The Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia was not built all at once.

It was founded in the thirteenth-century and then developed over several periods of construction. The founder of the convent, St. Agnes, was a daughter of King Přemysl Otakar I and his second wife Constance of the Arpad dynasty. Agnes decided to join the Order of Saint Francis of Assisi and, years later, founded a hospital and with it the first Convent of the Poor Clares north

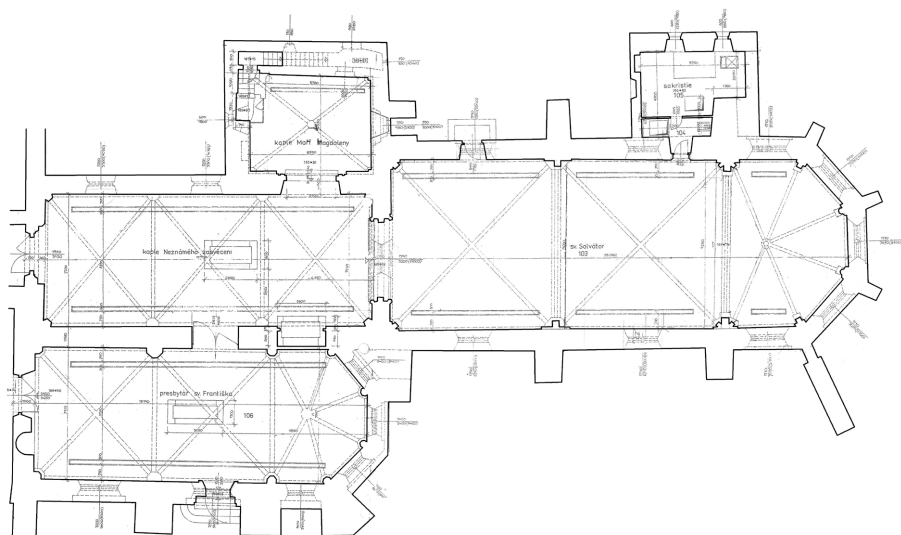


Above: Black and white map of Prague, 2015

Left: View of Prague old town from Petřín Lookout Tower
source from Wikipedia

of the Alps (which became a core part of the Convent of St. Agnes later), in circa 1231. At this stage, the buildings consisted of two parts with different functions; the core of the convent and its daily living wing. At this time the convent had no presbytery. The living wing had functions such as a chapter hall, refectory, sisters' workroom, a corridor, and household appurtenances with a gateway to the riverside. Typical of buildings from this era is the mixture of Late Romanesque and Gothic features and building techniques of marl blocks and bricks. Such features provide a strong spatial atmosphere in these rooms. The layout of the convent followed a reduced scale of the example of Cistercian monasteries which was current in central Europe at the time.

In the periods of 1234-1238 and 1238-1245, the convent was extended with several volumes of buildings with different plans and uses. A new Convent of Friars Minor was built in the eastern side of the oldest part of the building. The presbytery of the first period's convent was added in a smaller scale and the Chapel of St. Virgin and a square building volume were attached next to the presbytery. The chapel and the square building were, at first, two stories and



Plan of main part of the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia
Source from National Gallery in Prague

later became one high ceilinged space used as a chapel and St. Agnes' private quarters respectively. For this reason, the spaces of these rooms are disproportionately open and gloomy. The development of the extension happened not only towards the eastern side of the old part but also the western side. The cloisters, kitchen, gate house, north and southings and funeral chapel of the Convent of Poor Clares (the oldest part) was also built during this period. At this time, Agnes abandoned the former grand scale of the buildings and added additional features and functions. By the end of the extension period, architectural elements of the building such as scale, function, style and features became complex, and its spaces obtained richness.

In 1261, the last main part of the convent started to be built on the burial site which is the eastern side of the Chapel of St. Virgin. This was a mausoleum for Přemyslids (a Bohemian royal dynasty) in the convent. The architectural style of this part is purely classical, northern French Gothic. This was the final stage of the development of the Convent of St. Agnes. As detailed, the convent complex was growing throughout the century. Helena Soukupová the author of

Section of main part of the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia
Source from National Gallery in Prague



the history of the Convent of St. Agnes, asserted that;

‘While in the first building period they attended to the basic functions needed for running a convent community apart from attending to artistic problems, the final stage of the architectonic form was closely merged with its transcendental meaning, concerning the very substance of human existence and its participation in the cosmic order.’²

For this reason, the buildings do not have one clear arrangement throughout, which is normally found in church-like buildings in history, with the spaces organically connected next to each other instead of attached to corridors. This unique development makes spatial characteristics in the building irregular, without one pure arrangement. The environmental conditions, including the brightness created by natural light, perspectives through the spaces, and the perception of visitors are affected by this uniqueness of the building.

Another characteristic of the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia is the location of the graves of kings and queens and the altars of both church and chapel. They are placed not on one building axis but in the meaningful locations of each sacred architecture built during each era. In the Convent of St. Agnes, for these historical reasons, disproportional space and shifted axes, transitions of gloomy and bright space and many layers of meaning and ideas create the spatial complexity and give an interesting experience to the visitor.

After the completion of the Convent of St. Agnes, throughout periods of prosperity and decline, the building has been critically damaged. At the end of the nineteenth century, through the national self-awareness of the period, a movement of restoration was started. Since then, throughout many excavations, long periods of restoration and political movements, the reconstruction continued until the late twentieth century. In 1986 the Convent of St. Agnes finally opened to public as a historical museum. From then on, apart from a period when the convent was shortly closed for renovation after damage from floods in 2002, it has been open to this day.

1 *Castle in the Sky*, Dir. Hayao Miyazaki, Studio Ghibli, 1986. Film

2 Soukupová Helena, *Anežský Klášter V Praze*, Praha: Odeon, 1989, p 450

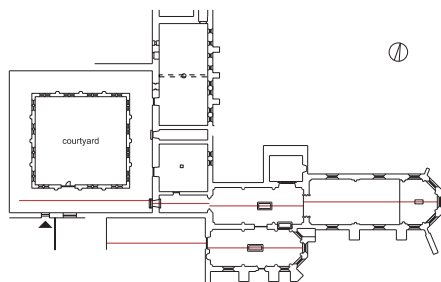
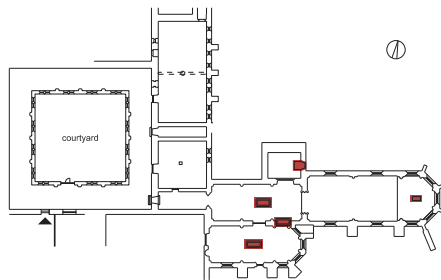
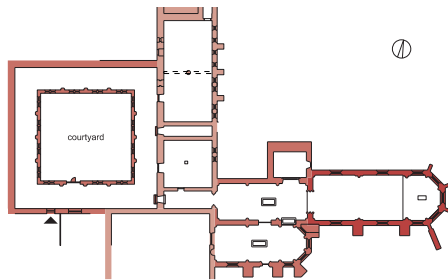
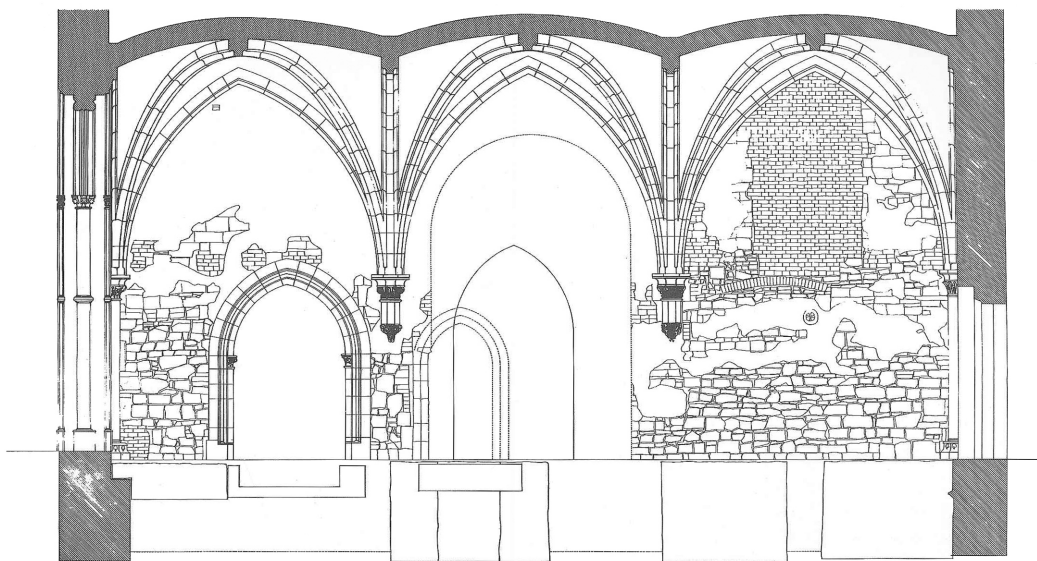
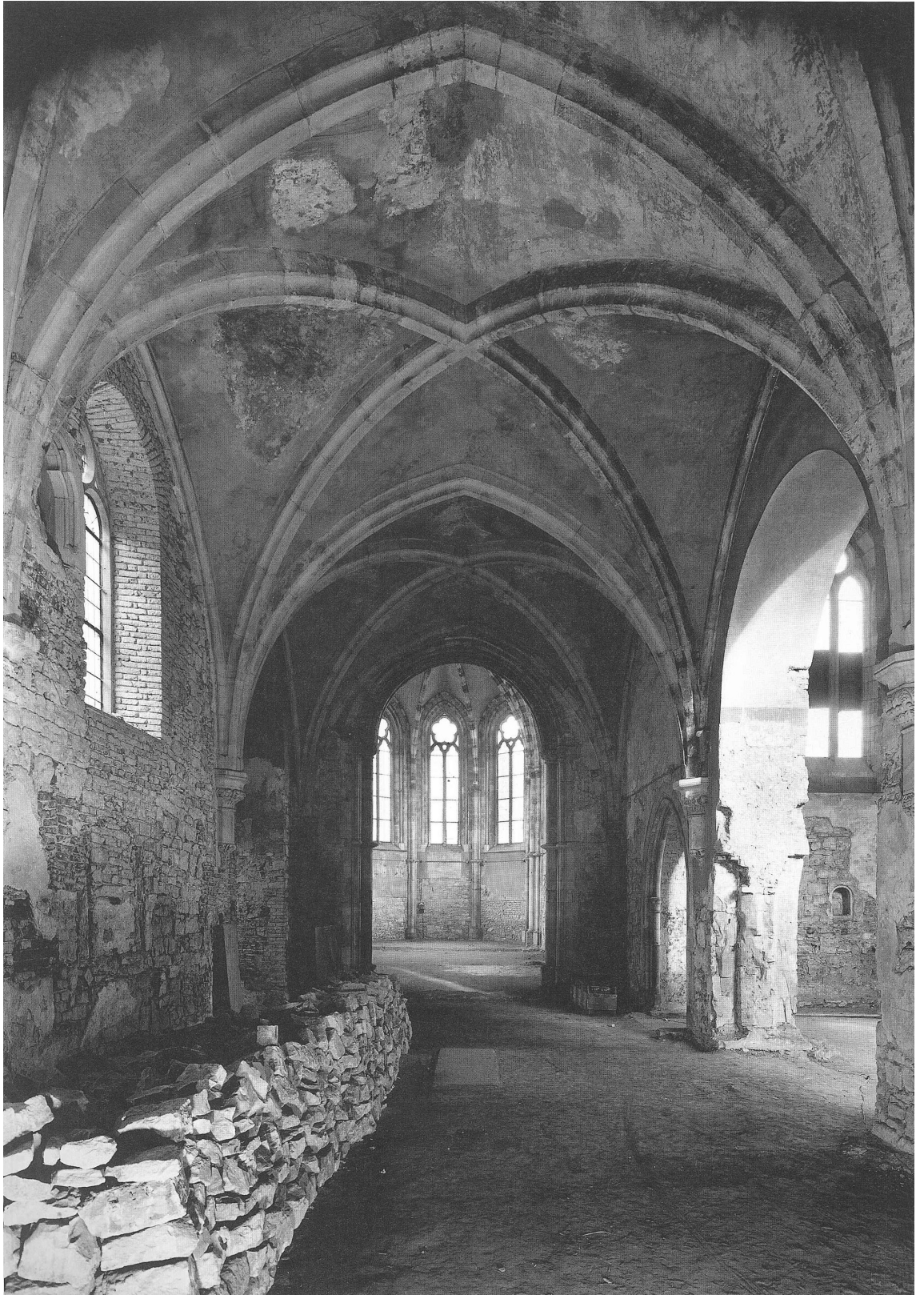
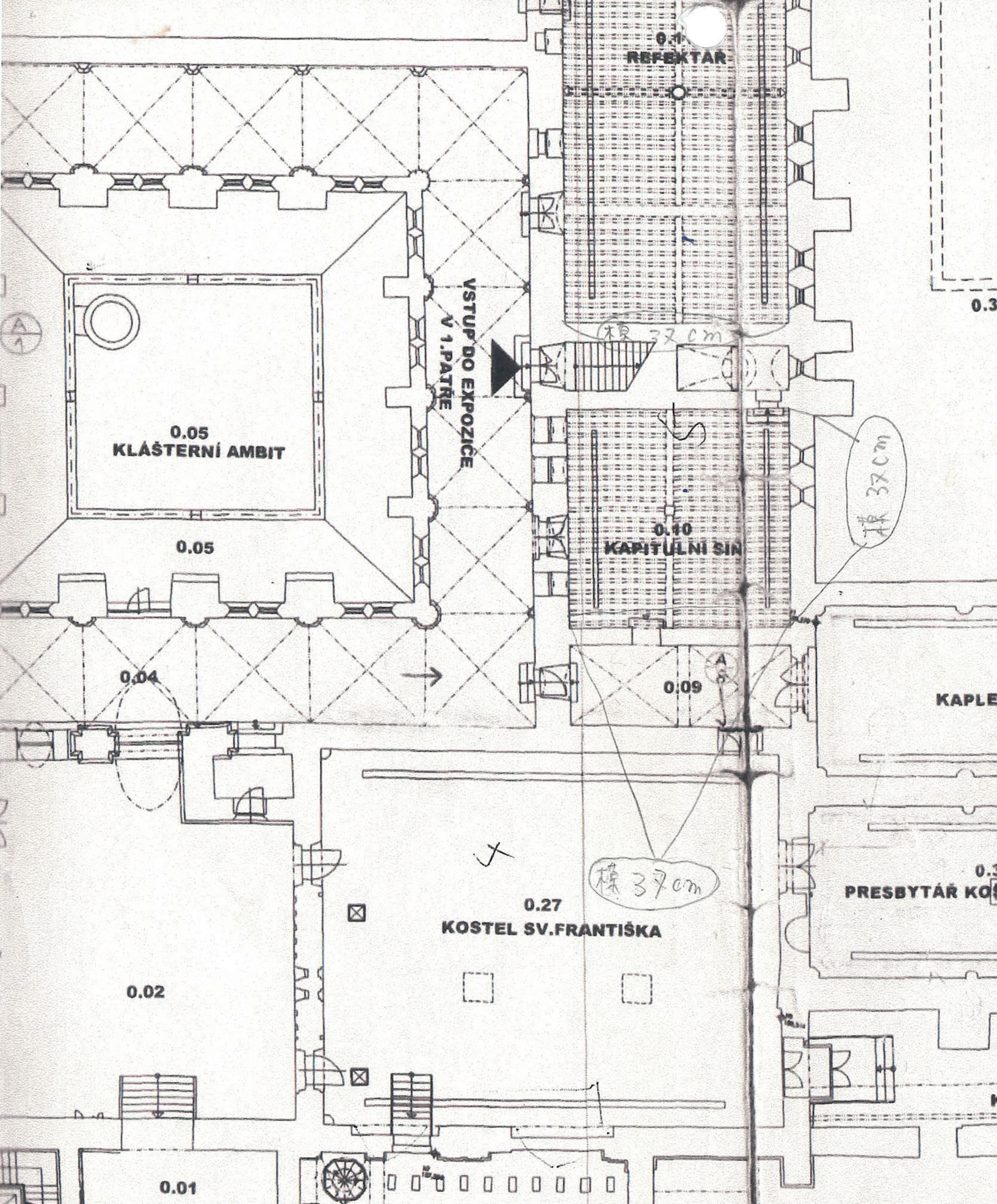


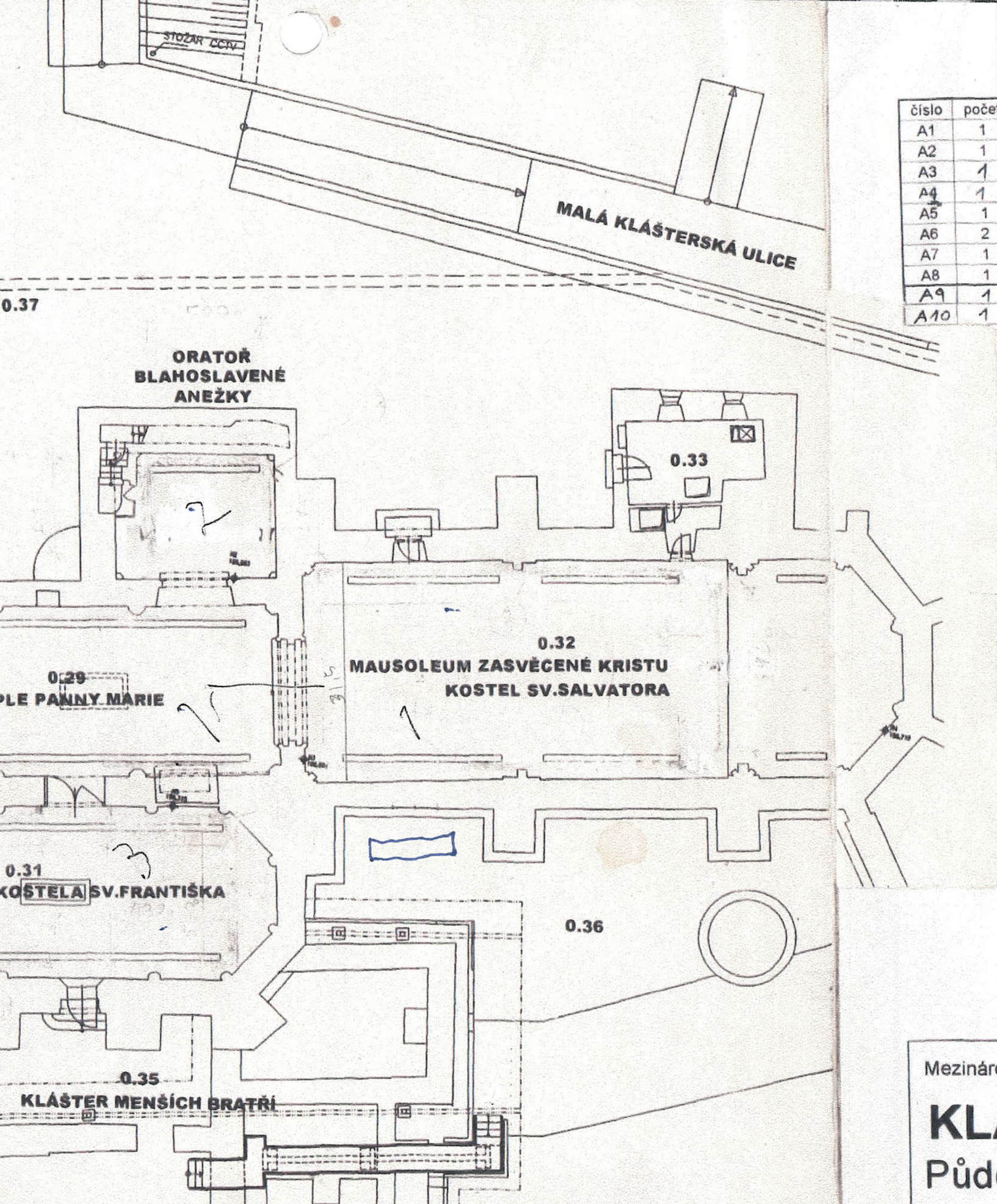
Diagram and photo
 Above: Development of the building, three different wall finishes
 Middle: Location of the grave stones, grave stone on the floor
 Bottom: Shifted axes, perspective towards room 7



Left: Elevation of the Chapel of St. Virgin / Anežský Klášter V Praze.
 Right: Interior view of the Chapel of St. Virgin
 Source from Anežský Klášter V Praze.







STOŽAR CCIV

MALÁ KLÁŠTERSKÁ ULICE

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ORATOR
BLAHOŠLAVENÉ
ANEŽKY

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KOSTEL PANNY MARIE

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MAUSOLEUM ZASVĚCENÉ KRISTU
KOSTEL SV. SALVATORA

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KOSTEL SV. FRANTIŠKA

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KLÁŠTER MENŠÍCH BRATŘÍ

číslo	počet
A1	1
A2	1
A3	1
A4	1
A5	1
A6	2
A7	1
A8	1
A9	1
A10	1

Mezinár
KL
Půd



Left: Interior view at the exhibition opening, 2014

Right: Courtyard view at the exhibition opening, 2014

The exhibition: The House that Continuously Circulates

The art exhibition took over most of the building of the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia. There were 7 rooms where artworks and sound installation were exhibited, through one general concept “The House that Continuously Circulates”. The sound installation worked to unify the exhibits and the space of the convent into one exhibition.

Rooms 1 to 7 are distinguished by the placement of the art pieces and the exhibition sequence. The suggestion of 7 rooms does not necessarily mean enclosed spaces, a certain order or function but more an indication of the space for individual artworks.

Sound installation was a key element to the exhibition. It was played everywhere in the building to tie the space together. The sound contains both song and melody. The text of the song was written by Jae Eun Choi, with the sound composed by Ari Benjamin Meyers. The singer was Nicole Chevalier and the sound engineer was Torsten Ottersberg. The sound installation did not visually influence the exhibition, however, it produced a certain atmosphere in the exhibition space and created psychologically, another art world in the space of the convent. Choi explained her idea for the exhibition as follows;

‘This exhibition entitled “The House that Continuously Circulates” is a continuation of my previous works on the subject matter of “time”.

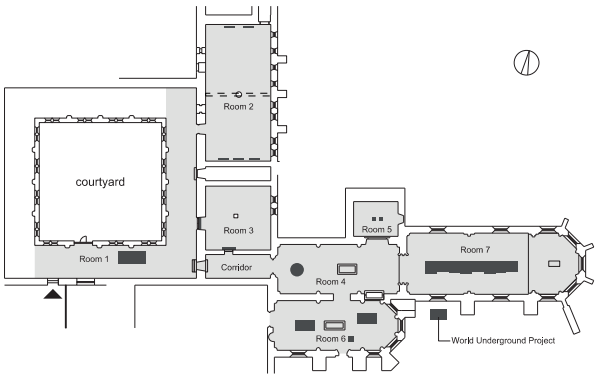
“Circulation” is a perspective of coexistence, rather than dichotomy of elements such as life and death, body and mind, light and darkness.

This exhibition takes place inside the architectural space of Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia (Czech: Klášter sv. Anežky České) in

Prague. This old building features a unique spatial scale and is also a symbolic space that originated from a historic figure named Agnes of Bohemia (Svatá Anežka Česká). However, the building itself was built in a manner that, to a large extent, excluded such symbolism. In fact, the inner space of the monastery even brings to mind zen meditation.’¹

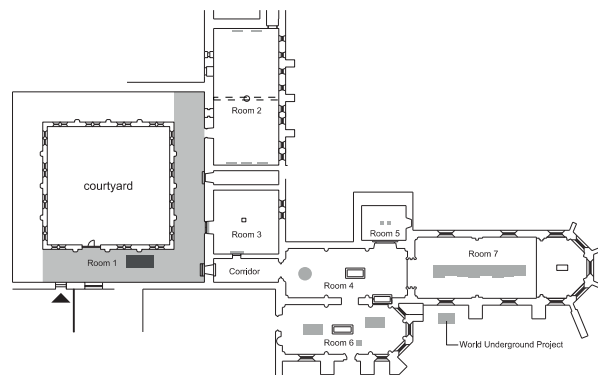
1 Choi Jae Eun, Exhibition leaflet: "The House that Continuously Circulates", 2014.

Rooms



Room 1

cloisters with moss garden









Cloisters and courtyard garden

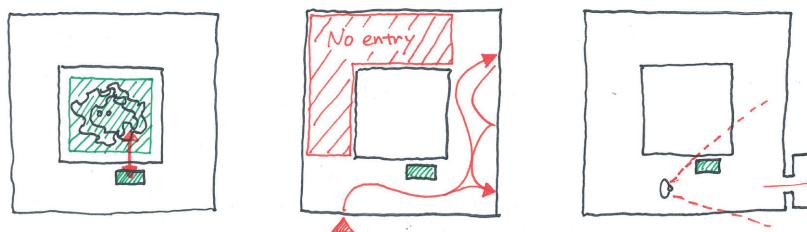
Room 1 is the first room that visitors approach after the entrance space. The space is defined by cloisters of the convent which creates an intimate courtyard housing a symbolic tree. Bright natural light comes into the space through the courtyard, creating a feeling of nature within the space. The surface of the glass windows is rough so that people are not able to see through the courtyard clearly but light can penetrate. This space provides the first impression of the atmosphere of the building. It is very intimate and comfortable. The character of the space is created by its scale, warm coloured stone and rough rendered walls, rhythmically continued off white vaulting and venerable masons' works. In the functional aspect, the cloisters are connected to other rooms which have been used as a corridor, a chapter hall, a refectory, a staircase, a kitchen (now the information desk), and the south wing (now used as the entrance foyer). These connections give spectators options to explore. People start wandering and seeking the next art pieces within the building.



'Manifolds in the Labyrinth of Time'

Choi's first artwork in the exhibition "Manifolds in the Labyrinth of Time" is placed within the cloisters. Living moss is covered on the surface of two marble tables and mineral stones are dotted on the moss surface. The moss and mineral stones give the impression of a scaled garden and correspond with the rendered wall and the tree in the courtyard.

The location of the art was in between the entrance and the pathway to the main spaces of the building, that is, this artwork is on the main circulation of the exhibition. It creates the impression for spectators that the exhibition has already started at this point. It works as if the art is an entrance gate to the exhibition. Spectators walk by the artwork and see the art and roughly rendered wall and the tree in the courtyard together, creating a feeling of time, history and perspective.



Diagrams
Left: Connection
Middle: Circulation
Right: Perspective

Encourage sequence, designing circulation

In the exhibition, Choi decided to close half of the cloisters and open the door to the courtyard. This decision was made to simplify the route of the exhibition circulation, without losing the feeling of wandering and visual and psychological connections to the nature in the courtyard.

The challenge of the spatial design here was to control the visual and physical connectivity with other rooms whilst maintaining good circulation in and through the spaces. As mentioned before, the space has connections not only to Room 2 which has other art installations but also a video installation which is attached to the door of Room 3 and the entrance corridor which connects to the main installation space.

It was quite clear from the beginning how important it was to consider the changes of scenery throughout the exhibition. From where to where will people move, what will they see in between and how will they feel. It was not only the matter of the art work itself, but also the matter of the condition that the artwork creates within the space. In fact, the art in each space was tested in many ways and its location was not fixed until the last moment. The location of the art was adjusted to the minute detail, with the shift of a centimeter making a difference. The position of the art accomplished good circulation, beautiful spatial proportion, and connectivity between the art and the courtyard of the cloisters.

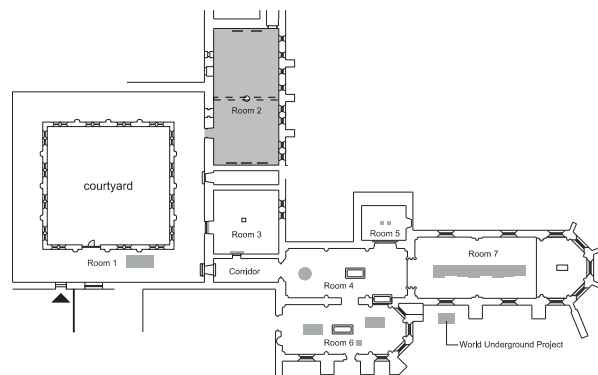






Room 2

photos in brick room









Refectory, the Convent of Poor Clares

Spectators come to Room 2 through the cloisters. This room was used as the refectory of the convent when it was built. The room is dark and gloomy. Most of the natural light comes indirectly through the deep window frames on the east wall. This calm atmosphere lets spectators imagine how this room was originally used as a refectory. The walls of Room 2 are made of dark red colour bricks and partially random rubbed stones. The floor is filled with dark red square tiles. The ceiling is a bare wooden structure, finished in black paint. These dark spatial elements distinguish the specific atmosphere for the room.

The shape of the room is rectangular and symmetrical. Two round headed arches spatially characterise this room. The arches sit in the middle of the room, bridging the longitudinal walls. The two sides of the room are not fully divided by the arches but spatially defined as separate. This room is one room but not one space. eight windows are located on one side, four on each side of the central arch.



“Nobody is there — Somebody is there”

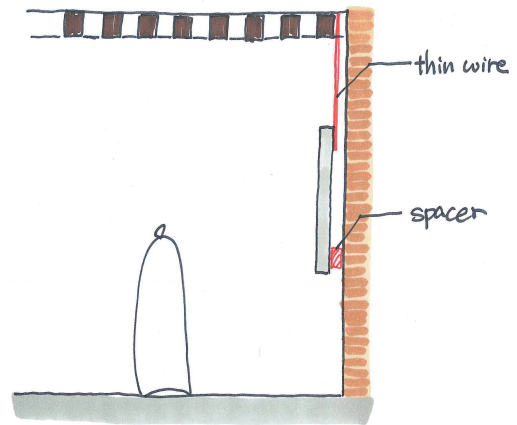
In this room, two sets of photos hang on two opposite walls, symmetrically. One set has three photos, the other has two. The photos consist of flowers in a vase, captured at different times. Some of them are fresh, others are dying. The three photos are all slightly different to each other. Each panel is 1500 x 1000 x 50 mm. They are erected and stably attached on the wall. Natural light comes from the side and illuminates both the photos and the wall. The dark appearance of the photos, contrasted to the brick's pattern and synchronised to the dark ceiling, creates a secret atmosphere and the feeling of eternity.

Presence and stability, installation method

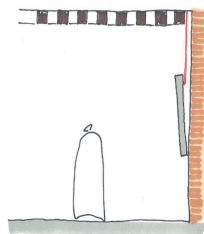
Choi had, from the beginning of the exhibition design development, a clear idea about this space and what she wanted to achieve. Choi wanted to place her two sets of photographs on two sides of the room. Each set shows a point in the lifetime of flowers. She wanted to mount them on the walls to achieve the stableness and the presence of these exhibits. She did not want to hang them from the ceiling because the photo frames would be tilted by hanging from behind the panel.

The problematic point of the installation in this room was, as with other rooms, that any part of walls could not be damaged by the installation. Since the building is protected by building preservation regulations, the display method of showing these pictures had to be thought through to fulfil both the building preservation and the artist's concept.

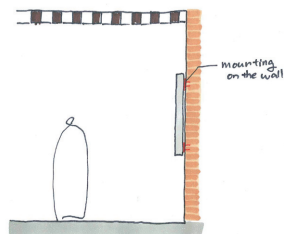
Choi and I discussed the solution of display with many options in terms of location, detail, and principal methods to install the photos. In the end, we were able to achieve one solution which satisfied both art work aesthetics and the building regulation. The solution was to hang the picture frames from the ceiling as close to the wall as possible and place small spacers behind the frames to keep the photos straight, giving the impression that these pictures were mounted on the wall. The cables used to hang them were very thin and therefore were not visible because the room is dark and gloomy. Artificial spotlights hung from the ceiling, illuminating only the inside of the picture frames to emphasise the images and their presence.



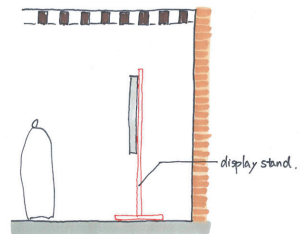
- No wall mounting !!
- No tilting !!



- No wall mounting !!
- Inclined frame.



- Mounting on the wall.

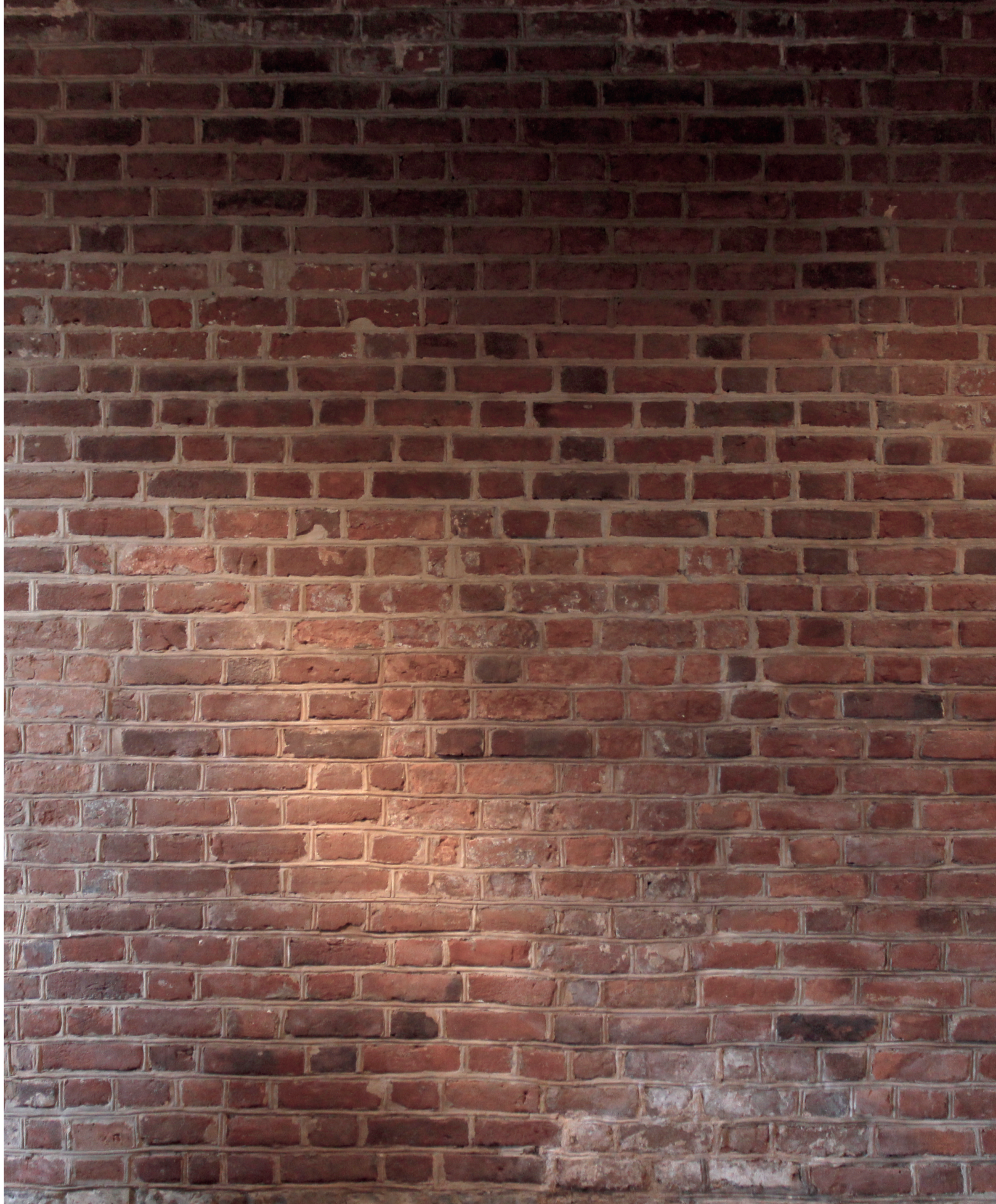


- No wall mounting.
- Additional object.

Display options
 Above: Hanging from ceiling with spacer
 Left: Hanging without spacer
 Middle: Mounting on the wall
 Right: Display stand

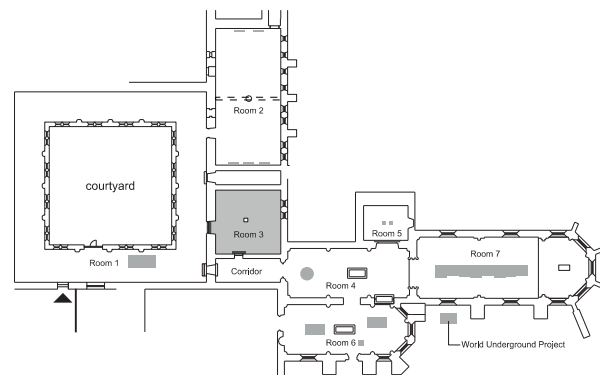


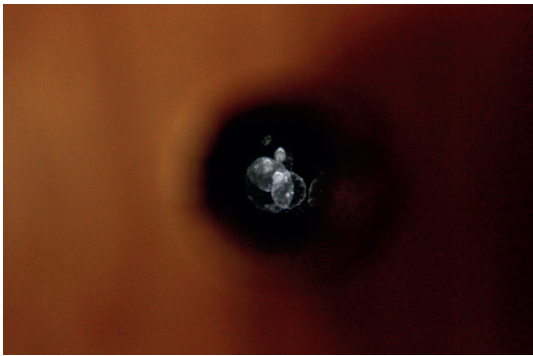
Spatial study with a physical
model 1:20



Room 3

Closed room and videos in architecture frame







Chapter hall, the Convent of Poor Clares

Room 3 is located next to the cloisters and corridor space between the cloisters and the main rooms for the Chapel of St. Virgin. This room was a chapter hall of the Convent of Poor Clares, built in the first period of the construction. There are two doorways, one to the cloisters and one to the corridor. The room is square plan and has a column in the centre. It is not a big space and has strange proportions compared to other rooms. In terms of circulation, two different connections make it complicated. With all that considered, the room does not work well as a space for installation. However, the doors of the room offered opportunity for display. One of the doors faces the cloisters which is a big and bright space. Another one is connected to the corridor which is dark and narrow.



“Circulation” and “Moment”

Due to the nature of Room 3 posing a challenge as an exhibition space, it was agreed that it would be closed as a room. Spectators cannot access the room but can see video art works on a panel and screen attached in the two doorways of Room 3. One of the video installations “Circulation” is installed on a panel which is facing the cloisters. Spectators look at the artwork through a microscope which is integrated into the panel as if people look inside of the room through a pinhole, out of curiosity. Micro creatures are continuously moving in the video.

The second video installation is on the other side of the doorway. The doorway faces to a gloomy corridor and is covered with a screen. The deep doorway frames the video artwork. The video shows a continuously flowing river on the screen. The flow of water seems to happen behind the wall of the corridor because there is no frame to the projection on the screen, but the doorway itself is seen as a cutout of the wall. Both artworks exist without the frames of art. Spectators look at these video installations through the architectural elements as their frame.

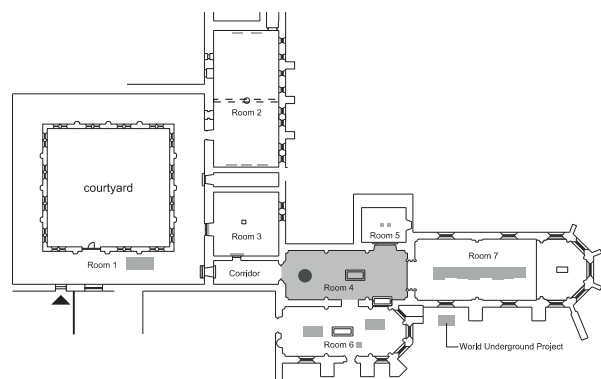


Detail visualises the concept

Soon after I joined the project, Choi decided to close Room 3 and use the doorways for these video installations. By closing the room and using only the openings, doors become the artwork in other rooms.

For the video installations, a temporary panel and a screen had to be installed. However the original doors were located where we wanted to have the panel and the screen. The first idea to install them was looking into the possibility of detaching the original doors. This was rejected by the National Gallery because of the risk of damage. Therefore, we had to design the installing concept and the fitting details for the panel and screen with the original doors in place. The idea was fitting the panel and screen between the gap of the doors and doorways to ensure the gap was invisible. Therefore, the room will be seen as if filled by art. Additionally, for video maintenance, access into the room had to be provided. The technical details of the video installation were achieved by a technician.

Room 4
silence with 1000 roses









Chapel of St. Virgin

Spectators arrive in Room 4 after walking through the dark and narrow corridor. Room 4 is a transitional space. The room is connected to four other rooms; Room 5 which is a small and dark, Rooms 6 and 7 which are high and bright spaces, and the corridor. The space of Room 4 is big and high compared to the corridor which spectators just walked through. This is because this part of the building, built as the Chapel of St. Virgin, was originally two stories high. The experience in the space gives the feeling of openness, even though there are no windows at eye level. The room has clerestories which are only on the north wall. Therefore, only indirect sunlight comes into Room 4 and the space is generally gloomy and peaceful. The spatial characteristic of this room is calmness. Each of the rooms connected to Room 4, have very strong, different, spatial characters. The spaces are connected without aligning the axes to each other, making the space unique and complex, encouraging spectators to slow down their walk. Room 4 successfully transitions the feeling of spectators from one space to another.



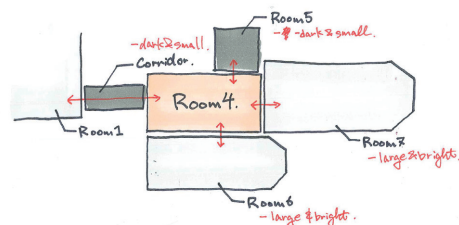
“Corolla”

More than a thousand living roses lie on the floor in the form of a circle, contrasting to the grave stone of the Queen of Kunigunde of Hohenstaufen. This art is called “Corolla” and placed in Room 4. The centre is slightly higher than the edge. Many different colours of roses are mixed in the circle form. Living roses are slowly dying during the art exhibition. The bright colours of the roses are fading, the petals wither gradually. Every day the art work shows its figure differently. It changes slowly but certainly. The art does not speak much to spectators. The process and appearance embodies Choi’s intention of the art. A couple of months after the opening of the exhibition, a few natural mushrooms started to grow from the bed of roses.

Display silence

This room was one of the most difficult rooms to design in terms of distinguishing the character of the space. The first idea was not doing anything in the room and making this room empty. However, since the corridor as a transition space already takes the role of visual emptiness, this room needed to have visual or conceptual meaning. After considering and rejecting the hanging of a picture at a high position on the wall adjacent to the corridor, Choi came to the idea of placing more than a thousand roses on the floor in between the corridor and a grave stone in the middle of the room. Typical of the character of this space is the atmospheric differences to adjacent rooms such as the corridor, Room 5 (private dwelling quarter for Agnes), Room 6 (presbytery of the Church of St. Francis) and Room 7 (mausoleum of the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia). The space is large and slightly brighter than the corridor and Room 5, and lower and gloomier compared to Rooms 6 and 7.

The idea of placing the art next to the doorway of the corridor creates two effects in the exhibition. One is connecting the cloisters and Room 4 with a visual connection. Spectators are able to glance the roses from the entrance area through the dark and narrow corridor. This encourages spectators to move on to further rooms. Using an object in this way shortens not the physical but the psychological distance between exhibits. The second effect was to keep the feeling of calmness and silence within the room. There are no three-dimensional objects apart from the elements on the floor; the roses and the grave stone. Their flatness ensures that they do not dominate. As they both calmly lie on the floor, they become a pair. This spatial attitude makes the room calm and uncharacteristic. This art and the space are as if a single flower in a vase sits by the window.



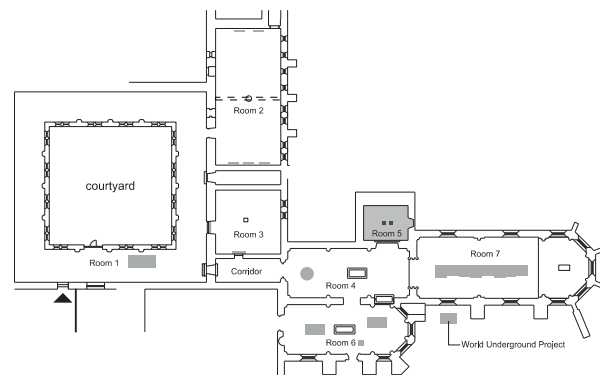






Room 5

Invisible existence of Anežka







Agnes' private quarters

Agnes' private quarters provides the smallest room in the exhibition. Anežka (St. Agnes) spent most of her late life in this room. Even now the room is her deputy of reverence. The room is connected on the north side to the Chapel of St. Virgin. This part of the building was two-stories when it was built. Due to this, there are small windows high up in the wall, which no one can look through. There are three steps down to enter the room. This darkness and the steps create spatial depth and emphasise the sacred atmosphere of the room, whilst gently separating it from the main space. People hesitate to walk into the room because of the three steps and stop at the entrance before slowly proceeding. People unconsciously acknowledge the spatial quality and the sacredness of the room.



“Two Anežskys (Agnes)”

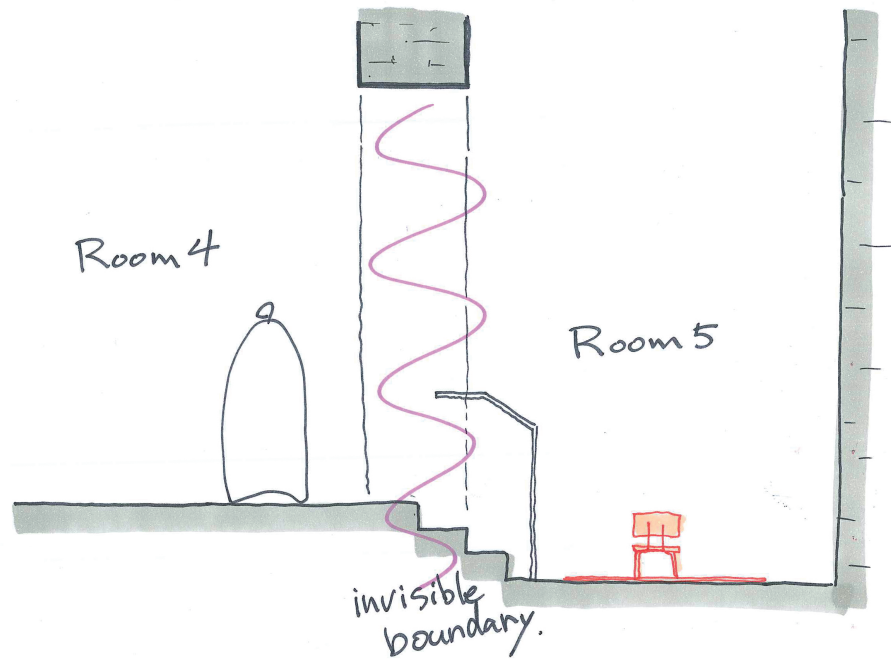
In Room 5, spectators see two small chairs facing each other placed on aged papers containing poem texts. The papers are laid on top of others, making a floor pattern, resembling ceramic tiles or parquet flooring. The paper pattern is organised randomly and creates a sacred place for the chairs. The edge of the paper pattern represents the idea of sanctuary. The two chairs are decorated differently, showing Agnes’ different stages of her lifetime; one with colourful beadwork, the other without any decoration.

Invisible boundary, unconsciously separated

In this room, I, as a spatial designer, did not get involved in the art development but instead designed a boundary for the room. Choi had a strong impression about this room and intended to have a strong art element which represented the sacred figure of St. Agnes. Therefore, the room should not be accessible but only visible for spectators. Three steps between Rooms 4 and 5 were the key to the spatial design. As described before, these steps separate Room 5 from Room 4 softly, but physiologically clearly. The installation design focused on how to keep the original soft spatial boundary for the installation instead of dividing the space completely.

Our design intention was to utilise the three steps as a spatial boundary instead of building up a new partition to ban spectators from entering. According to Choi's art in the room, the boundary required more function than just a psychological separation. As an example, when Choi had an idea of using turtles as the artwork in this room, though the idea was abandoned because of the historic conditions of the building, the boundary had to have a function of keeping turtles in the space. In this case, the boundary means not only separation of space but also technical enclosing of the space.

After going through much discussion and development of both art and space, separation was created by spanning thin wire in between the handrails. The wire is not very visible in the gloomy space but indicates the intention of no entry.

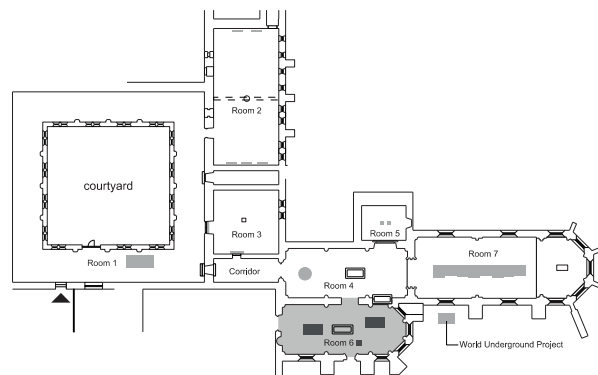


Above: Skech of spatial
boundary
Below: Photo of stairs



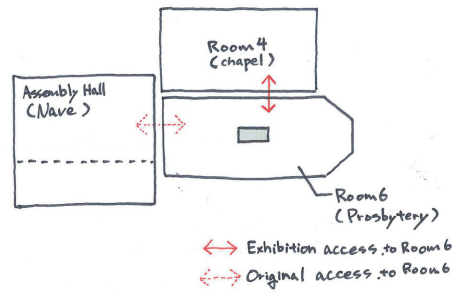
Room 6

Paper and tension in space









Presbytery, the Church of St. Francis

Room 6 is adjacent to the southern side of Room 4 (the Chapel of St. Virgin). This part of the building was built as the presbytery of the Church of St. Francis. The space is large and bright. Natural light comes into the space from the clerestories on the east and north walls. As this part of the building was built as a presbytery, this space has a directional aspect. The apse defines the direction of the space towards the east. Originally, when it was built in the thirteenth century, people entered this room from the nave which is connected to the west side and has been rebuilt as an assembly hall. However, during the exhibition, since the assembly hall was closed, access to this room was provided only through the doorway from Room 4. This inappropriate entrance, compared with the architectural order, makes the spatial experience unique and acknowledgeable.

Another unique feature in this room is the location of the grave stone of King Wenceslas I. This sits on the axis of the presbytery of the Church of St. Francis, and is located just in front of the doorway to Room 4. This conflict between the locations of the entrance and the grave stone mystifies the spatial understanding for spectators. Often they come to visit the building and wander about in the room, instead of pausing at the entrance looking up at the clerestory, because of this mismatch of the entrance location and the architectural order.

The National Gallery requested that art work was not placed on the grave stone because of the risk of damage and, of course, out of respect to holy ground. Therefore the position of the grave stone became an important spatial element for the exhibition design.



“Hyper-Verse Flower & Garden” and “The Stroll of Dreamer”

Two different artworks are in Room 6. One is called “Hyper-Verse Flower & Garden”, the other “The Stroll Dreamer”. “Hyper-Verse Flower & Garden” is an artwork extended from the World Underground Project. It contains fossil pieces from the project and sheets of original Japanese hand-crafted paper which were used for the project. They are placed on flat containers. One of them sits on a wooden container and the other is placed on the floor. Two thin wires, attached to the tie beams of the building, support the art pieces. One of the wires lifts the corner of the paper, the other one is attached to the fossils on the sheets of paper. This tension of the artworks directs attention up towards the ceiling.

“The Stroll of Dreamer” is Choi’s artwork created for an exhibition in 2010 at Hara museum of contemporary art in Japan. A pair of Asian antique shoes and a big tangled object made of string are located in a clear long square case.



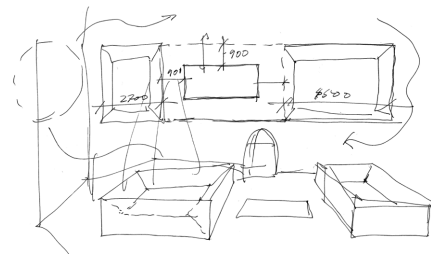
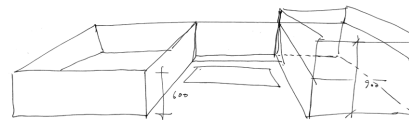
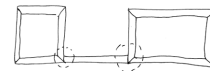
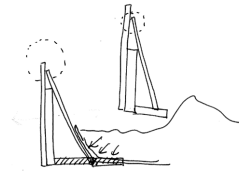
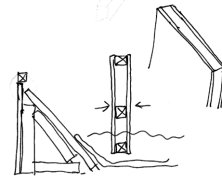
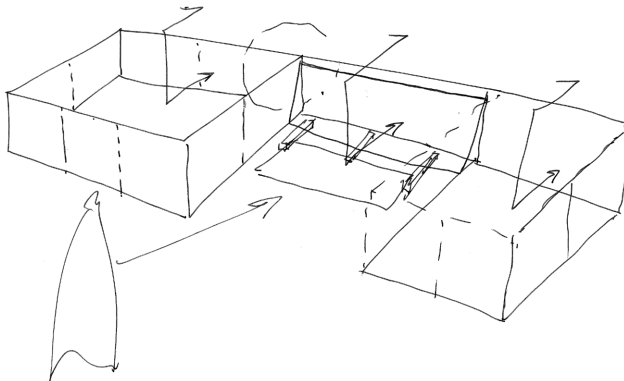
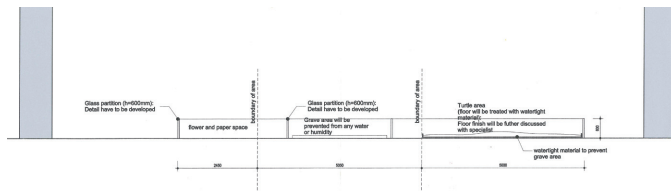
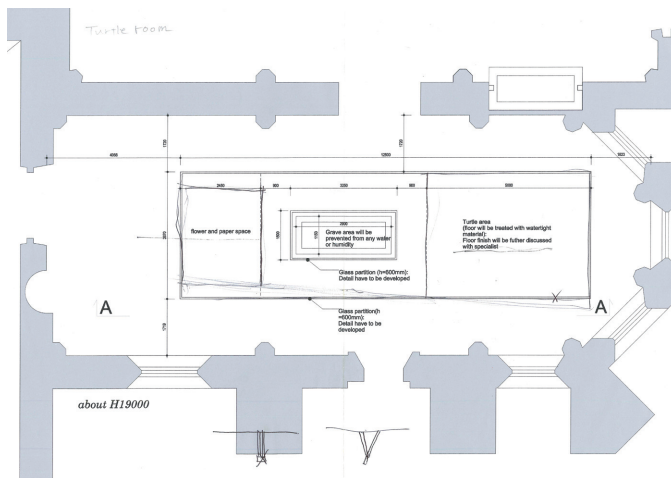


Composition of elements, art and architecture

As mentioned above, the spatial character of Room 6 is complex. Moreover, the development of the exhibition within this room was not simple and straight forward because of the development process. Initially, before digging out the papers of the World Underground Project, the idea of art in this room was showing layers of unearthed paper from the project. However, the papers of the project, buried in the ground, dissolved and condensed into fossils. Choi felt that exhibiting the fossil pieces alone was not strong enough in such a large and dynamic space. The second idea was placing living turtles in the room. Since the idea of turtles did not suit Room 5 because of the living condition for turtles, the possibility of the idea was investigated for this room. Unfortunately, this idea was denied by the National Gallery because the set up for turtles may cause damage to the grave and its surroundings.

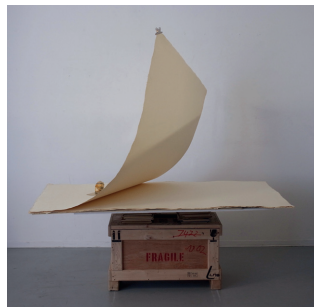
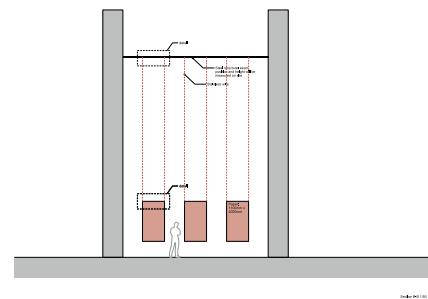
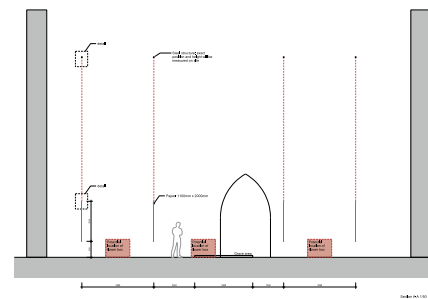
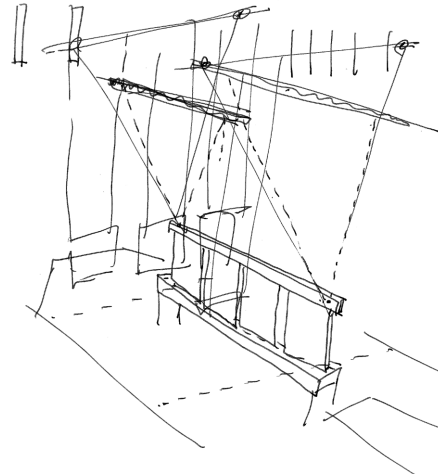
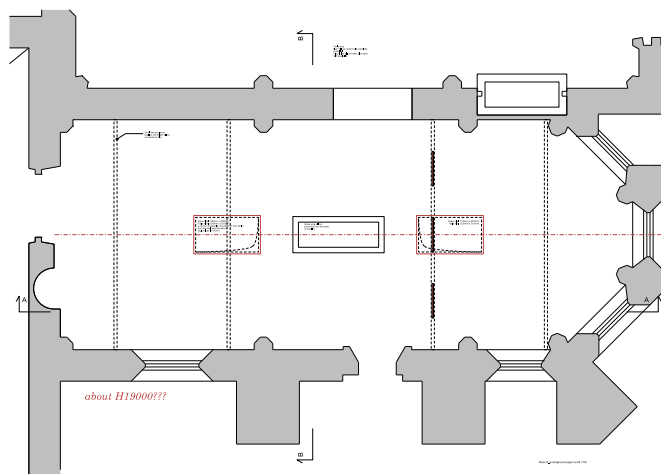
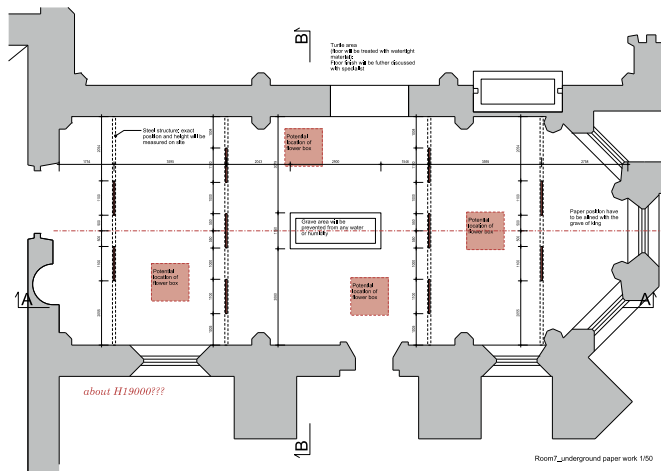
After that, Choi came up with the idea of hanging original papers for the World Underground Project. We tested a couple of options and agreed upon the idea of lifting up the corner of the paper with thin wires. As mentioned, the wires are tied to tie beams which support the stability of the building. Without using any additional structural elements, the idea achieves a presence which leads spectators' eyes up into the vertical space of the Gothic building with the art's intention and the architectural intention matching together. In the end, Room 6 became a place for an assembly of artworks which are well composed within the space. The location of the grave stone and the tie beam above were also in consideration as part of the composition and arrangement.





Turtles were the exhibition artwork in Room 6 during the process of the project. Properties of turtles, maintenance scheme, relationship to the spatial quality and architectural characteristics were deeply investigated.

Above: Sketches and plans, fence design for turtles
Left: Photos, survey of turtles in local turtle farm in Prague

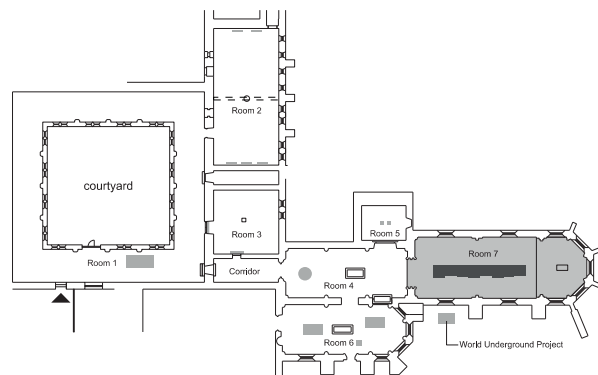


The idea of hanging paper form tie beams was developed through many options. These abandoned options also led to both the art and the design improving.

Above: Options of hanging paper
Left: Photos, study process

Room 7

Antique paper collection in climax







Mausoleum, the Convent of St. Agnes

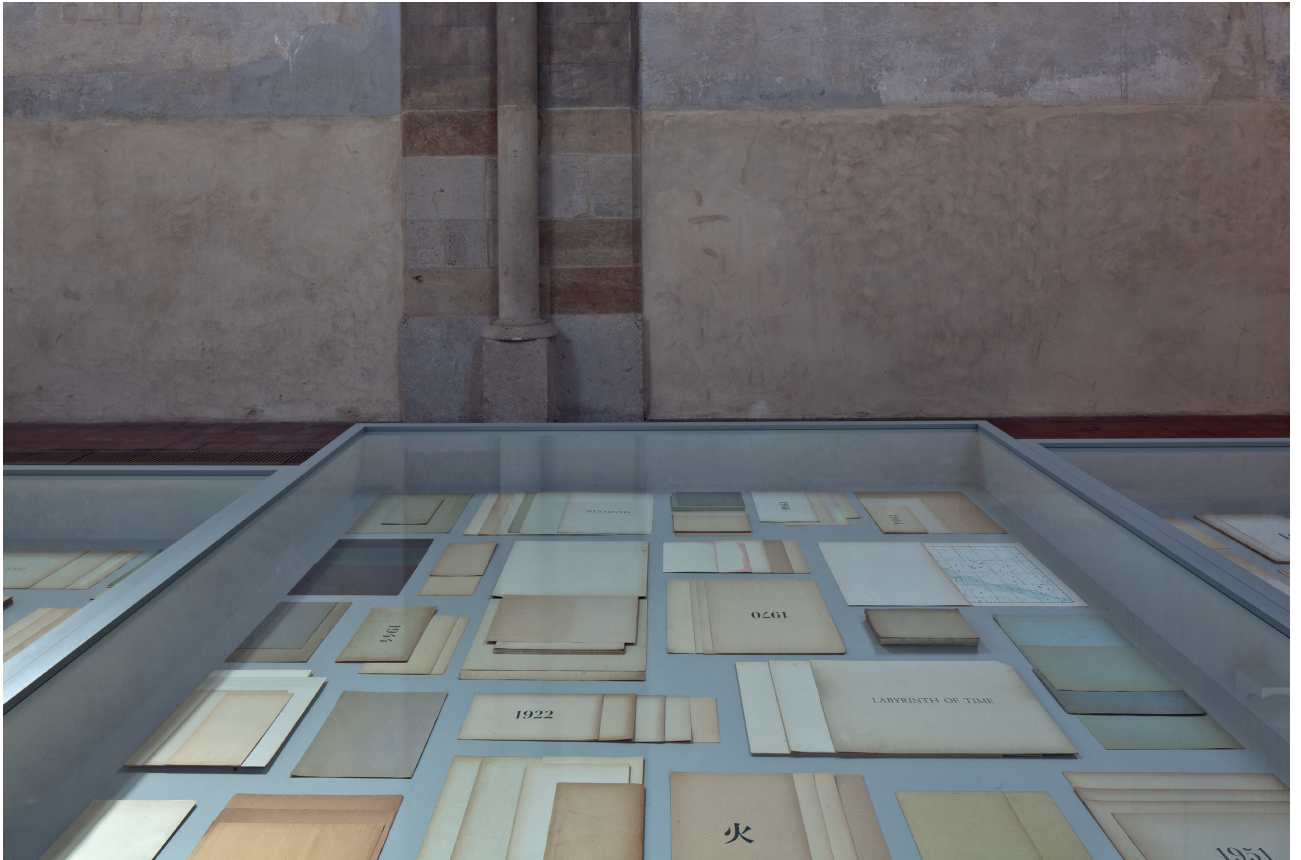
Room 7 is the main space of the building which was built as a mausoleum during the last phase of the convent's development. The spatial character of this space is modest and dignified. Two vaults and a polygonal choir define the space strongly. Verticality is emphasised by the height of the space. There are no windows at eye level, therefore visual connection between the inside and outside is not provided. However, natural light comes into the space through clerestories. The atmosphere of the space changes with time, the weather and season. Generally the arrangement of the space is symmetrical. A small door to a vestry and a wooden door with a fence to the outside are on the north. The entrance archway is shifted slightly off the centre line of Room 4 (the Chapel of St. Virgin) and there is a step at the entrance opening, providing a gentle gesture to the space and separating the main space from Room 4, although they are connected with a big arch opening.





“Paper poem”

Within this room, a collection of old papers is displayed in eight large display cases. The papers are different sizes, colours, and ages. Some overlap, others are piled. They are placed delicately and beautifully in light grey showcases. The colours and pattern that the collection creates has a contrast and sync with the architectural elements of the building, for example the walls. Walking around the collection gives the sense of an ancient atmosphere created by the papers, architecture and natural light. The display cases are three different sizes, aligned on one side. Spectators look at the collection in the harmonised atmosphere with architectural elements of the rendered wall, vertical vault space, and bright natural light through clerestories. This coordinated condition creates different sceneries while spectators walk through the room.



Big gesture for big space

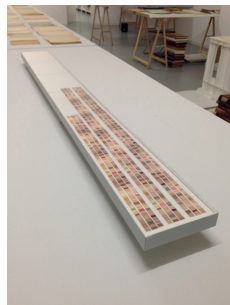
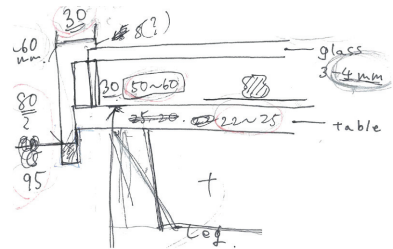
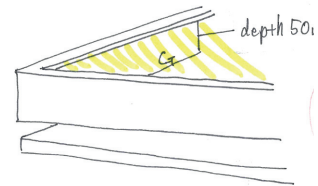
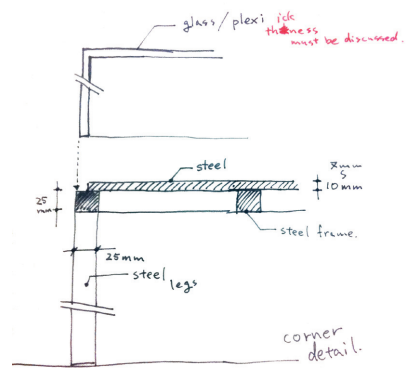
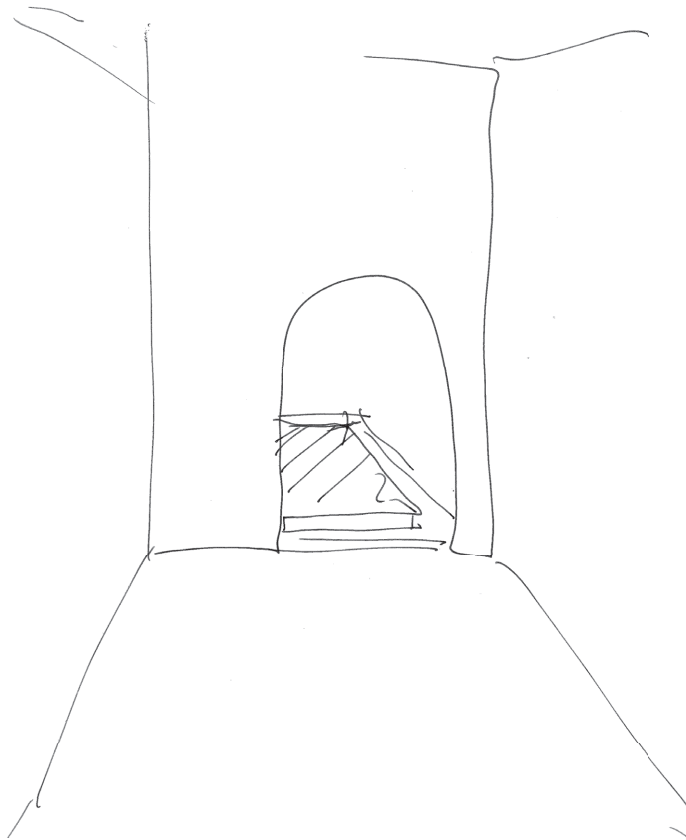
Showing a collection of antique papers in display cases was Choi's consistent idea from the early phase of the project. The biggest concern in Room 7 was the scale of the space. We noticed that, since the space is dignified and the scale is massive, small gestures of art cannot be equally present as the space of the building. Therefore, Choi and I worked on the display concept together to find a solution which answered for both the art piece and the spatial presence. Maintenance, constructability and budget were also key factors of this design development.

We came up with several display design options, however, it was not easy to agree an option which satisfied all of the concerns. Finally we both agreed on a solution of arranging different sizes of display cases. After that point, we focused on the arrangement of the display cases and details including colour and depth. We tested positions, colour and size with scale models from 1:20 to 1:1.

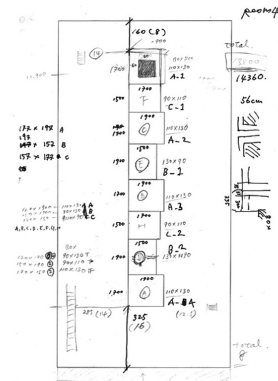
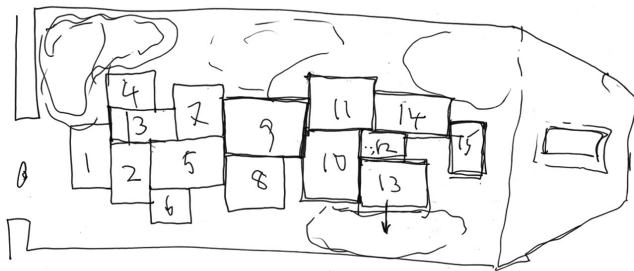
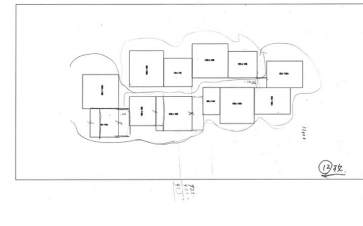
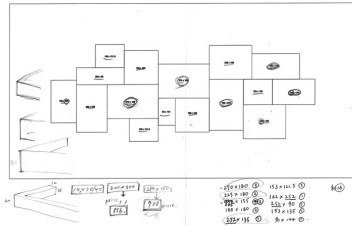
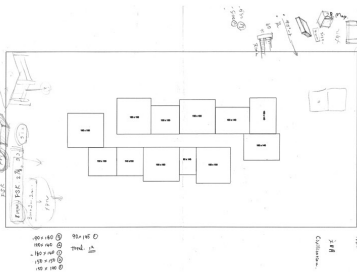
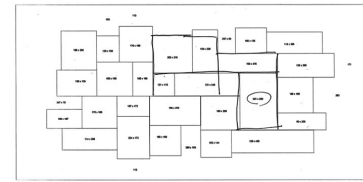
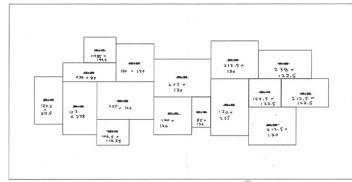
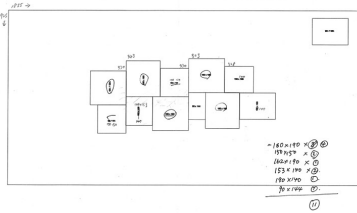
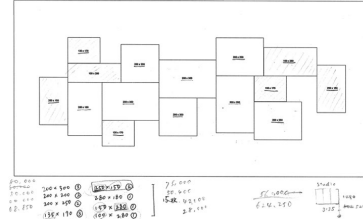
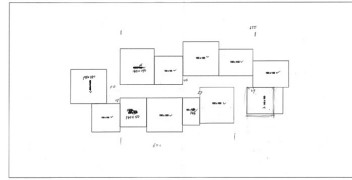
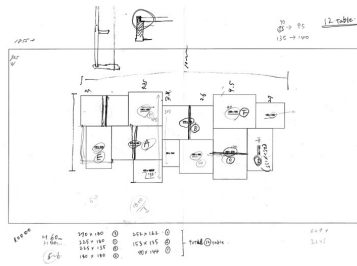
The solution was the arrangement of three different rectangular shapes of display cases, organised linearly. They are aligned on one side and the other side of them zigzags. This arrangement is related with spectators' observing behaviour in the space. This form of display cases can accommodate two different activities; walking towards the end to go to the space where the choir is, and looking at the antique paper collection. On the straight side of the display cases, people walk towards the end of the room and feel the atmosphere of the space. On the other hand, on the zigzagged side, they stop walking sometimes and look at the paper collection in harmony with the architectural space.

Another noteworthy point of the spatial design for this room is the position of the display cases. They are located neither on the axis of the room nor in the middle of the arch entrance. The position was set sensibly to guide people into the room. The display cases do not align with any of the architectural axes in the same way that the rooms of the convent buildings do not align to each other. The art in this room is utilised to define the spatial activity of spectators within the architecture.





For Room 7, varied options of display case layout were studied. At the same time, the form of the cases, layout of papers, and spatial appearance were tested with physical models and mockups

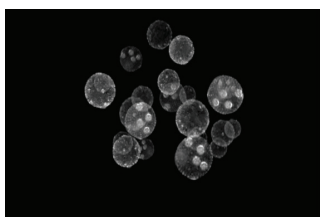


Left page above: Sketches, detail of the display cases
Left: Photos, mock up study and 1:10 scale model
Right page: Layout options and model photos





Description of works



“Circulation” / Room 3

An extension of the World Underground Project, this series of videos exhibits individual circulation and breeding of microbes.

I extract and cultivate microbes from papers that had been buried for years. Then I record videos of what I examine through the micro-scope. The microbes on the papers reveal a confusing structure of repetitive creation and annihilation, just like the world we live in.



“Moment” / Room 3

Watching the river flow under the Bellevue Bridge, I think of Heraclitus’s words: “No man ever steps in the same river twice.” “Yesterday’s man died in the man of today, today’s man dies in the man of tomorrow.”

I murmur a fateful monologue, citing Plutarch from Borges’s “A New Refutation of Time”: “Time is the substance of which I am made. Time is a river that sweeps me along, but I am the river,” that flows into it all.



“Agnes’ Times Face Each Other” / Room 5

St. Agnes’ life consists of time that penetrates layers of worlds and events and stares straight into the background. Two chairs each represent St. Agnes’ life as a princess and life as a seeker of truth. Time separates the two lives, but only conceptually. Moments from these two lives are placed in the same space. Light and sound seep in thorough the window and refresh this shared world that encompass the two different moments.



“Paper poem ” / Room 7

I collected old papers from street stalls and secondhand book stores. The papers interact with air that permeates through them over a long period of time, breathing and losing colour. As all objects tenaciously maintain their existence, papers seem as if they, too, wish to remain papers forever. Papers sing a song about their time, as if telling the story of centuries they have endured.

Paper poem

When I was a tree, I had embraced the earth....
When I was a tree, I left a shadow behind...
When I was a tree, winter was bare as I was...
When I was a tree, my scent would shelter sorrows of the world...

I'm content as a tree...
I'm content as a paper...

When I was a tree, my fruits would heal...
When I was a tree, my autumn leaves would make the poet feel...
When I was a tree, I would soak myself in the night of circulation..
When I was a tree, a turtle would hear the sound of the river stream with me...

I'm content as a tree...
I'm content as a paper...

When I was a tree, I used to sympathize with living creatures such as deer...
When I was a tree, the dew drops on my trunk became part of the river stream...
When I was a tree, my seeds have flown away to become trees that spread seeds on their own... If I could be reborn, I would become a jellyfish...

But I'm content as a tree...
I'm content as a paper...

Choi Jae Eun, Exhibition leaflet: "The House that Continuously Circulates", 2014.

How to display

How to display

In the preceding chapter, the detail of the project was explained. In such a situation, the display of Choi's solo art exhibition has been done. This had a particular display context of a historic and remarkable preserved building which usually functions as a historical museum. As the next step, it is necessary to highlight how the essence of the exhibition design is carried out.

The principle of this design is born from an especially unique exhibition circumstance. Therefore, it is not meaningful to state the actual design detail for another circumstance, for example; a specific installing detail for preserved walls, this type of sequence works best for this situation, and so on. However, by generalising the design thought and idea into a design method, even these types of extraordinary project are able to be a reference for similar exhibition design projects. This experience works for other projects as a methodology or starting point.

It is difficult to specify the role of a spatial designer in such a project because of the ambiguous nature of the design process. It is, however, valuable to explain the process and the design methodology. This is not the only method in which such a project can be achieved. However, it could be a potential opportunity for display design. I believe it is a good one.

Premise

Communication with the main ideas

It sounds very obvious, however, it is extremely important that when there is an artist creating an exhibition, the main idea from the artist must be respected first and foremost. From the beginning this must be understood. This is not always given by artists, but sometimes by curators, designers, architects or clients, whoever leads the project. Designing art display

in the exhibition context is not the same as creating art. There is always something else which will be the main element of the exhibition. That needs to be understood by any spatial designer. However, support for the main concept is required through curation, spatial design and technical considerations.

This does not mean that the idea of the artist has to be followed on all occasions, but it is necessary that display design is closely worked with the artist through understanding what the artist is trying to achieve. From this point, designing the exhibition can start. What should be avoided is creating contradiction against the concept of the art. Within the boundary of art concepts or with the collaboration of the artist, the project should be carried out. If there is no communication and the exhibition design takes its own way without considering the art concept, it creates a mess in the exhibition space and of the concept.

Conceptual art demands pure gesture within the space. A gesture as content, created by an artist for a solo exhibition or a curator for a group exhibition, unifies the whole of the art installation. Consistency of the gesture in space holds the different conditions together.

Reading and understanding the space

Another point within this premise is to profoundly read the spatial conditions which the building and its history create. In using a historic building as an alternative art space, the condition is often unique and individual in terms of not only the geometrical factors and the technical regulation but also the social context and historical background. Often these elements are very complicated and not visible at a glance. To understand these conditions, it is absolutely necessary to visit the site and understand the current spatial characteristics of the building and the surroundings, including; How do you approach the building from distance? What is the feeling when entering the building? How are the climate conditions like natural light, changes of lightness through the spaces and temperature? What is the feeling or atmosphere within the spaces? Is it more than what can be read from the plans? There are many things you are not able to read from plans

and photos. Digital information is often not helpful to understand actual spatial qualities which people sense within the space.

Research about the background of the building is also an important aspect. The history of the building provides its spatial qualities and meanings. The societies and cultures related with the historic building give crucial information about the background of the building. That is a limitless process, constrained by only time and application.

Additionally, clarifying the technical limitations is vital. Each building, each room and each wall, floor or ceiling have different regulations in historic buildings in terms of installation. However, the rules are often not clear and cannot be easily anticipated. Each specific occasion must be questioned to the institution of the exhibition space. Sometimes the restriction only comes when the art is proposed. When the idea of the artwork is unique and has not been considered before, the institution has to react to the individual request of the installation. In that case, the art installation may be limited by the response. However, this restriction can be seen as a collaboration between the art and the architecture.

The spatial uniqueness of a historic building such as the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia brings enormous spatial quality to the art exhibition. Moreover, the sensibility of the space is also high. It demands a large amount of time and endeavor to actually understand the spatial quality of the building. This is a vital precondition to taking on the spatial and display design of such an exhibition.

Presence and Coexistence

Effort to create a phenomenon in a place, at a time

The origins of the 'idea' of artwork and architectural space are different. That is to say, the relationship between artwork and architecture is like the relationship between the inside and the outside of architecture. Both spaces have different environmental conditions and their own functional requirements and philosophies. Designing display is like connecting, bridging or jointing them. Or, it could be described as like planting vegetation in

a garden. The plants must be able to take root in the ground and grow up through receiving the influence of the external environment. There is no absolute answers applied to all situations. The answers are individual. The question to answer is how to create the connection of two characteristic elements.

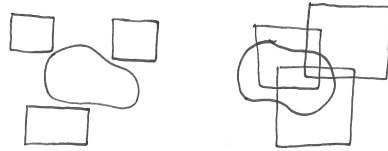
If the artworks are placed in the exhibition space as in any other ordinary exhibition gallery, what would happen? Are there any issues? What would the issues be? The answer is relatively simple. First of all, the artworks may not be able to be set in the space. As previously noted, preserved historic buildings often have high limitations for installation. Without deep thought and clear ideas for the installation, it does not work. Furthermore, the qualities of the artwork and the atmosphere of the architectural space may influence negatively on each other. Placing a creation into another creation is not simple and easy. These two different total identities may conflict with each other without well designed attachments.

The key to the design method is to create a phenomenon which happens only in that place at that time. It is important to let two different elements exist together with their individual presence, enabling their combination. This gives spectators of the exhibition a feeling of unity and the uniqueness of the experience. Robert Venturi stated his thoughts towards complexity of architecture;

‘An architecture of complexity and accommodation does not forsake the whole. In fact, I have referred to a special obligation towards the whole because the whole is difficult to achieve. And I have emphasised the goal of unity rather than of simplification in an art “whose ... trust [is] in its totality.” It is difficult unity through inclusion rather than the easy unity through exclusion.’¹

In the ‘alternative space’ for art exhibitions, making a happening in the space is a big part of the challenge of designing the exhibition. This is also a constant in art exhibitions in historical buildings. Using the space of a historic building, with a long and varied life, is as if cutting out a moment from time flow in the building.

The next question is how the design should be done to achieve the concept of presence and coexistence. Clearly, the condition of historic buildings is always different and individual. We cannot state design solutions which work always, anywhere, for any building, but can describe the methods as applicable tools for art exhibition design in historic buildings. Through the experience of the art exhibition in the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia, three key areas of focus came to the fore as a methodology for designing such a situation. They are the 'Environment,' the 'Scale' and the 'Point of contact'.



The environment

The environment, as definition, is the sum total of the surroundings of a human or living organism. The environment is the counterpart of the human, that is to say, in the exhibition, the environment is the unity of all the factors constructing the exhibition. The environment appeals to the spectators. It is not fragments of elements but the synthesis of elements in the specific place at that time. People are able to sense the environment beyond the person's knowledge and consciousness. To gain presence and coexistence, the environment, that is, all the constituent elements of the exhibition, must be comprehensively designed in the architectural space.

The environment is constructed by these constituent elements and their relationships. Such elements of the exhibition environment are the climatic conditions like natural light, the weather, and the seasons, and the physical conditions like architectural components, for example material, finish, technique, age and interior and exterior space, artworks, their appearance and their 'idea'. Since the environment is already the synthesis of the individual constituent elements in the exhibition, designing the environment is equally to design the exhibition comprehensively rather than individually.

This attitude towards comprehensive design makes the exhibition both present and unified.

The spectators in the exhibition receive the environment and its sequential changes through their experience during the exhibition. How the spectators feel and understand the environment depends completely on them and their experiences. They may enjoy it. They may not enjoy it. The comprehensively designed environment, however, lets them feel the presence and coexistence of all elements in the exhibition space.

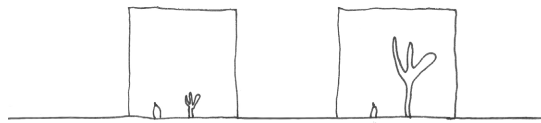
‘The traditional art object, be it a painting, a sculpture, or a piece of architecture, is no longer seen as an isolated entity but must be considered within the context of this expanding surrounding environment. The environment becomes equally as important as the object, if not more so, because the object breathes into the surrounding and also inhales the realities of the environment no matter in what space, close or wide apart, open air or indoor.’²

Room 1 is a good example of this idea. The spatial qualities of the building and the art object are designed together to achieve the total art environment. The green moss and mineral stones are seen with natural light through the courtyard, with the tree beyond adding synthesis. The art object itself may not have worked out as well as how it was presented, if the consideration to the environmental elements were individual. The scale, materials and perspectives were also well considered for the creation of the environment as a whole.

Room 4 was also created with good consideration of the environment. The connectivity and atmospheric gaps between Room 4 and its adjacent rooms were well considered for the development of the exhibition design. It was balancing sensitive parameters of the environment that achieved a successful connection between art and space.

Room 5 also achieved artistic atmospheric existence without any distraction. This was created through the totality of the art concept and the historical space, considering the spatial boundary and not dividing the two rooms with a visible element. By not creating an additional element of

design, the boundary did not detract from the art concept, whilst the divide itself enabled the art to enhance the spatial quality in Room 5.



The scale

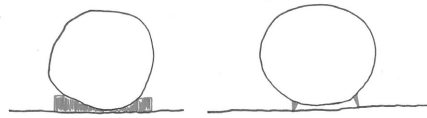
The significant difference between art and architecture is usually the size. The former is mostly the scale of humans, the latter is much larger than human scale. This creates more than a physical difference. To gain presence and coexistence for exhibition design in this context, this scale is also an important consideration.

Generally speaking, the artworks appear to spectators at human scale. Additionally, the exhibition space and the architecture are much larger and impose themselves on the spectators. People are located in between these two different scales. They are in the space of architecture and are influenced by ‘the idea’ of the art. This variance of scale would cause a problem if the influence from both sides is estranged from each other or interferes with each other. If they are not within the ideal distance and proportion, spectators will feel the separation of the artwork from the site or concealment of one to the other.

The scale is not only defined by physical size like large or small, but also related to brightness and colour. These atmospheric aspects are interlinked with the feeling of the scale. To avoid such a situation and to gain the adjacent ideal distance, the sizes of both must be harmonised. When the spatial gesture of architecture is large, the art should be concerned with the size and react in either scale or quantity. When it is small, the art makes a smaller gesture. The exhibition which has harmonised the gesture between art and architectural space brings people the feeling of presence and coexistence.

They feel within the consistent 'idea' of art and architecture together.

Rooms 6 and 7 have a different approach to achieve these qualities of exhibits. Both of the rooms are large, high, and bright spaces. These spaces are already spectacular as they are. Anything small and weak cannot be presented well in these spatial characteristics. Room 6 answered this with the quantity of objects displayed whilst Room 7 achieved harmony with one large element. Assembly of objects can gain atmospheric bigness in the space. Once the art receives presence, then coexistence with the architectural spaces can be arranged. Room 6 communicated with the space by the arrangement of the quantity of art elements. Although with different implementations, both Rooms 6 and 7 were able to create a cohesive experience with such a spectacular building.



The points of contact

When an object is set in a place, a contacting point occurs between the object and the place. It is as if foreign matter is mixed in the space. It may make an inflammation without adjacent treatment in between the two sides. The conflict between two different matters is seen in spatial design and architecture. Robert Venturi quoted Gyorgy Kepes when explaining;

'Contrast and even conflict between exterior and interior forces exist outside architecture as well. Kepes has said: "Every phenomenon — a physical object, an organic form, a feeling, a thought, our group life — owes its shape and character to the duel between opposing tendencies; a physical configuration is a product of the duel between native constitution and outside environment."³

This explains that the outcome influenced by an internal organic system and an external condition of environment is the reaction of both internal and external conditions. Venturi continued with his idea about the relationship between inside and outside of architecture;

‘Designing from the outside in, as well as the inside out, creates necessary tensions, which help make architecture. Since the inside is different from the outside, the wall — the point of change — becomes an architectural event. Architecture occurs at the meeting of interior and exterior forces of use and space. These interior and environmental forces are both general and particular, generic and circumstantial.’⁴

This can be said in relation to an art exhibition in a historic building. The historic building, such as the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia, has had a long life and gained many characteristic scars of historic changes. It refuses the temporary additional elements and contemporary changes because of the differences of age and stature. Concern for the connection is therefore required. All the related factors of the art exhibition like the historical meaning of the space, the background of the spatial identity, technical details, the art concept, and the required conditions, culminate in the contact between the building and the exhibits. The contacts must be able to handle these complex and fragmented factors. The design should be humble, not another additional factor to be designed. It is not adding or inserting but sorting and merging. On the other hand, the design of the connection should not be anything weak and fragile as the concept of the design. It must be the design unifying the totality of the art exhibition.

Looking at the display method of the project, Rooms 2 and 3 are strongly related with this topic. The hanging strategy of the picture frames in Room 2 was thought through in attachment details to achieve the best relationship between the wall and picture frames. The picture frames were hung in the room sympathetically, without negatively impacting on the conceptual idea of the art. The fixing details of the panel and the screen in Room 3 enhances the appearance of the video installation. In this instance, applying

the art without taking out the doors enabled the accomplishment of the idea of art in the room. This detail created the unity of two individual existences.

- 1 Venturi Robert, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, New York: Museum of Modern Art in association with the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Chicago, 1996, p 89
- 2 Frederick Kiesler, "Second Manifesto of Correalism," *In: Art International*, 9.2 (March 1965), pp 16-17.
- 3 Venturi Robert, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, New York: Museum of Modern Art; in association with the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Chicago; distributed by New York Graphic Society, Boston, 1966, p 85.
- 4 Venturi Robert, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, New York: Museum of Modern Art; in association with the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, Chicago; distributed by New York Graphic Society, Boston, 1966, p 89.

Conclusion

In general, historic buildings do not change the place they exist. They do not change the age of themselves beyond the flow of time. The present cannot add age in its creations. This is the fundamental context which historic buildings have. People who collected ancient manmade objects in ‘cabinets of curiosity’ saw the value in the collections. The fragility in the value is what people need to be aware of and appreciate.

Methodological solutions are sometimes liable to generalise the design details and to provide noncommittal answers for actual design situations. In generic contexts, that can disrupt the design process because of their ambiguousness for actualisation. However, in such specific contexts, taking design method as a stable anchor point provides a comfortable journey during the development. Contemporary art exhibitions in historic buildings are a key opportunity for design method to influence.

Lately, as seen in the example of Versailles’ contemporary art exhibitions, the value of old and historic buildings as the venues of exhibiting contemporary art has become recognised. Instead of removing the historic context of the building and inserting a ‘white cube’ style gallery, the rooms are kept as a before, maintaining them as both socially and historically precious. Moreover, the contemporary art involves itself in the historic context, creating an enhanced totality through the juxtaposition of two unique elements.

Through Choi’s solo art exhibition in the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia, I de-scribed the exhibition design for conceptual art in historic buildings. This is a unique case of the combination of conceptual art and a historic building. Exhibiting art in an original space with unique limitations is not the same as in a converted art gallery. In tackling this project, there were some important aspects which do not often happen in art exhibition design, for example; the venue was not a gallery for contemporary art, the building was a historically a highly important building within the

society, the building was built over a complex course of development, and the exhibition was based on the extension of a previous art project. These points distinguished this exhibition from other typical art exhibitions. From this perspective, some remarkable design issues became visible, including; the difficulty of art installation, the complexity and the individuality of the architectural space and the importance of understanding the art concept. These challenges show that it is important not only to design each situation carefully, but also to have a bigger picture as a design method to achieve consistency of the spatial design. During the project, three key ideas came to the fore; treating the exhibition environment in totality to achieve a unified spatial design, paying attention to the difference in scale between the art and the building, and taking sensible care to the contacting points between the art and architecture. In general, the exhibition design is swayed by both the art objects and the venue. By using these design methods for art exhibitions in unique circumstances, the exhibition is able to gain originality and unity. The benefit for both art and architecture is precious. Art can gain the historic spatial quality; the architecture can offer new potential for its usage. This type of art exhibition has big potential for art, architecture and cultural development.

As an exhibition designer, dealing with such conditions needs to have high priority in the design. Without leaving critical scars in the historic buildings or the surroundings, enhancing the space with art and letting people realise the quality of what has been existing. Therefore, designing the exhibition must be the task of the people who understand space and are capable of dealing with its intricacies. In this context of conflicting conditions such as historic venue and contemporary creation or temporary events, the methods outlined in this project can help to narrow unlimited possibilities and remove the inadequate options during the process. Through the exhibition design for Choi's solo art exhibition in the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia, as an example of this context, notable design as method is shown.

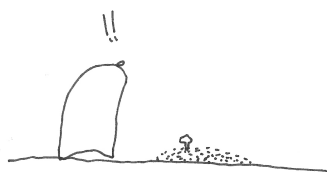


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Credits

Display 'there and then'
Presence and coexistence

Written by Noriyuki Sawaya

Photographs

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Artworks

Jae Eun Choi

Exhibition title: The House that Continuously Circulates

Exhibition period: 24 Jun. – 21 Sep. 2014

Artist : Jae Eun Choi

Venue: National Gallery in Prague, the Convent of St. Agnes of Bohemia

Organised by National Gallery in Prague and Kukje Gallery

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